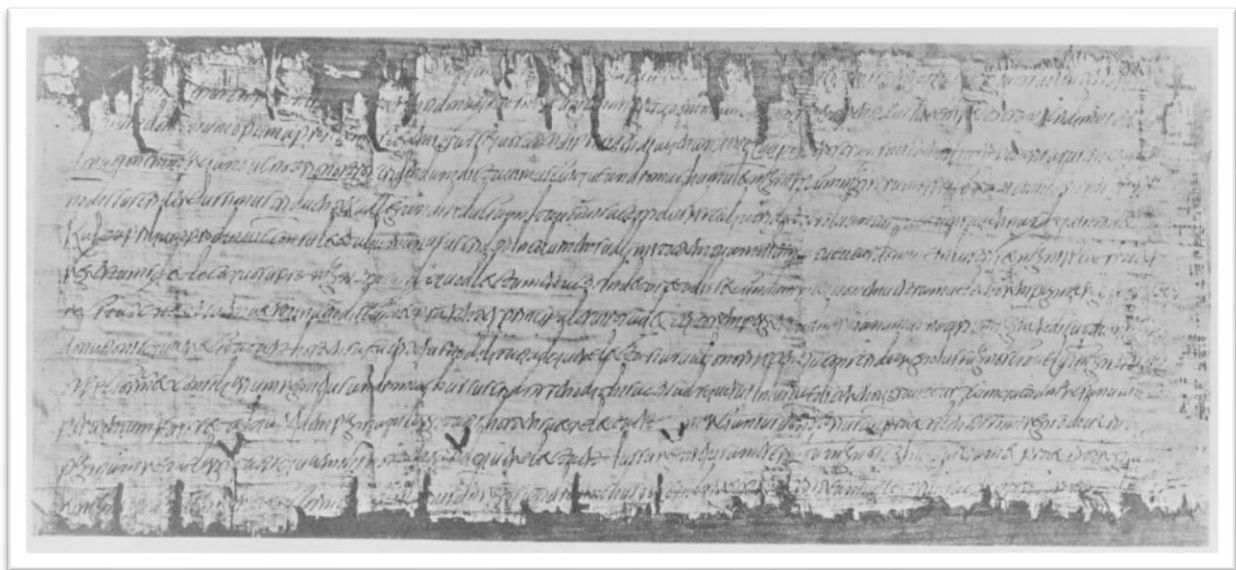


# FRAGMENTS FROM THE PAST

**A social-economic survey of the landholding system in the Ravenna Papyri**



**NIELS PAUL ARENDS**

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# **Fragments from the past**

A social-economic survey of the landholding system  
in the  
Ravenna Papyri

Niels Paul Arends

**Universiteit Leiden**  
**2018**

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**Cover picture: *P. Ital. 10-11 A*, taken from J. O. Tjäder (1954) 56.**

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# Introduction

Not all papyri come from the valley of the Nile. There is a group of Latin documents, coming from the archives of the church of Ravenna, which unaided by the Egyptian climate successfully passed through all the climatological hazards of history. The first mention of them is in a letter sent in 1433 AD to Cosimo di Medici, the grandfather of the famous Lorenzo, and Jacques Cujas in 1561-62 AD was the first to read any of them.<sup>1</sup> In 1805 Gaetano Marini gathered them and some others between the covers of one book.<sup>2</sup> Although a good number of these papyri were subsequently republished all through Europe, Marini's volume has served by large as the standard edition throughout the whole of the nineteenth- until the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup>

It was in 1954 that Jan Olof Tjäder thought it to be time for a newer, correct edition. For each piece of text Tjäder provided a bibliography, text, translation, apparatus and commentary. For example, the nineteen documents dealing solely with donations are preceded by a long introduction (p.250-279) that classifies the various elements found in such documents and traces their development. His endeavor was long, and it must have been tiresome at some points, but it was worth it: The two editions are – and this is not an exaggeration – a masterpiece.

The twenty-eight of the first volume include estate records, wills, an appointment of a guardian, a release and - the heart of the collection - nineteen donations, in most of which the church of Ravenna figures as beneficiary. No. 2 is the famous piece that mentions property confiscated from the Arians by Justinian and handed over to the church of Ravenna. No. 10-11 is the equally famous document concerned with a piece of property near Syracuse that Odoacer had donated to Pierius, one of his powerful supporters. All walks of life are represented, from Stephanus, *vir illustris et magnificus* (No. 18-19) through a well-to-do silk merchant (4-5B and 11-VI 2) to a tailor (14-15) and an ex-slave (20). Many illiterates appear and not only from among the lower classes: A man could become a sub-deacon or make his way to the command of a *numerus* without being able to read or sign a document with anything but a cross (No. 8, 23).<sup>4</sup> In the second volume, which was written a couple of years later, a new group of papyri were published, in the same style, together with some remarks on the earlier thoughts of the

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<sup>1</sup> J. O. Tjäder (1955) 19.

<sup>2</sup> G. Marini (1805).

<sup>3</sup> I. Gallo (1986) 104.

<sup>4</sup> From now on each document from the Ravenna Papyri will be designated as *P. Ital.*, together with its respective number.

man himself. Most importantly, it added a group of bills of exchange, together with commentaries on the history of its property and owners. These records should be seen then, as a completely functional archive of legal transactions/agreements of every kind, which could be consulted by any interested party and used in court as means of verifying claims of ownership of some other legal right/privilege. Together, they demonstrate that documents continued to play an important part in court proceedings, both in Roman and later era's.

What makes these papyri most interesting, however, is the fact that they can be taken as a prime piece of evidence for the existence of an agricultural economy, maybe for a lively land market. We see Goths and Romans, Greeks and Jews, buying and selling pieces of land to each other. We also see them donating quite extensively to the Church, which in its turn, occasionally, donates something back to its Christian followers. And, interestingly, they cover a large amount of time, with the first papyrus dating from September 445 AD, and the last papyri coming from (around) 700 AD.<sup>5</sup>

Historians have some idea of what the early medieval agricultural economy looked like in the west in the eighth and ninth centuries, but they have not been able to do the same for the centuries before. The relative lack of know-how about these centuries in the West – from the fifth till eight centuries – is a result of the paucity of usable source material for the period, and, in particular, an almost characteristic absence of documentary evidence. In this matter, the late antique historian relies heavily on the occasional, sometimes idealized, reference to rural life found in literary sources, barbarian law codes and a somewhat fragmented archaeological record.<sup>6</sup> For much of the eastern world for the same period, the situation is not much better. Here the late antique social-economic historian is again obliged to piece together what he can from literary evidence, epigraphy, and archaeological evidence.<sup>7</sup>

The only region in the Roman world, East or West, for which there is enough documentary evidence to begin a useful and prudent study in the late antique agrarian economy is Egypt, from which there survive numerous collections of papyri. In the last decades, the papyri have revealed very interesting and significant details of the late antique economy. And, most importantly, on the basis of these documentary papyri a relatively clear picture of late

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<sup>5</sup> First papyrus: *P. Ital.1* (445 AD); the last papyrus could actually be several papyri, because some of them are dated 'around 700', but the latest papyrus is probably *P. Ital. 45*, which seems to originate from the second half of the eight-century. See: Tjäder (1982) 181-185.

<sup>6</sup> For the *polyptyques*, see: J. Percival (1966) 134-138; S. Guérault (2003) 313-333; J. Nelson, S. Joye (2013) 19-31.

<sup>7</sup> See for an introduction A. D. Lee (2013) 223-240; M. G. Morony (2004) 166-194.

antique agrarian social relations for the region has emerged.<sup>8</sup> Still, to many, the very idea that the Egyptian papyri can tell us anything about the agrarian economy in the West has seemed unlikely, and far-fetched. Such certainly was the position of Marc Bloch, as brought forward in his classic essay ‘The Rise of Dependent Cultivation’:

“No doubt Egyptian and African evidence can throw precious light on the origins of the Western seigneurie. But only if we ask of them what they can legitimately supply. That is, information, not about the actual thing that we are studying, but about analogous things. In short, we must treat them as documents of comparative history.”<sup>9</sup>

It is then, perhaps, quite surprising that, since the work of Jan Olof Tjäder in the 1940’s and 1950’s, no other scholar has examined the Ravenna Papyri thoroughly; or is aware of their potential for that matter. This phenomenon has gone hand in hand with an apparent lack in knowledge on the workings of land in and around Ravenna, aside from the recent work (2016) of Thomas Gray ‘The Rural Economy in Ostrogothic Italy’; but even in this chapter the Ravenna papyri are not mentioned.<sup>10</sup> When talking about distribution of land in Italy in Late Antiquity, this is mainly done in the context of 1) the formation of the state, how the Germanic *gens* became a *regnum*; 2) how Ostrogoth policy worked in regard to religious tolerance; 3) whether the Ostrogoth kingdom is a continuation of the Roman empire; 4) the ethno-genesis of the Ostrogoth people; and lastly 5) social and cultural relationships between Romans and Goths.<sup>11</sup> Although these different debates touch upon the usage of land during late antiquity, most observations are not comprehensive and make by no means extensive use of the Ravenna Papyri, or comment on their importance for understanding the economy in late antiquity.

On the other hand, it is quite easy to understand why these papyri have not been picked up more, or at all, by scholars. This particular period, from 445 AD till 700 AD, fits perfectly between two classic groups of historians, that of the classicists and the (early) medievalist. For medievalists the Ravenna Papyri are most likely too early to consider, and for most of the classicists it is, perhaps, the evidence is a bit too late. They are part of a period which cannot be

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<sup>8</sup> Most obvious articles and works that show this are: D. Rathbone (1991); R. S. Bagnall (1992) 128-149; J. Rowlandson (1996); L. S. B. MacCoull (2011) 243-246.

<sup>9</sup> M. Bloch (1966) 237.

<sup>10</sup> C. Gray (2016) 263-259.

<sup>11</sup> For formation of the Ostrogoth state: J.J. Arnold (2014); for Ostrogoth policy: P. Heather (1998); for a more critical view on the Ostrogoth kingdom being a continuation of the Roman Empire: J. Moorhead (1995); for the ethno-genesis of the Ostrogoth people: S. J. Barnish, F. Marazzi (2009); for Roman-Ostrogoth relationships: P. Amory (1997).



distinctly be put as ‘ancient’ or ‘medieval’, for both groups of historians can find pieces of evidence in these papyri that correlate with their studied period in time.

Whatever the reasons, it is the aim of the following chapters to do away with the darkness that has surrounded the historiography of late antique landholding in the West. In the framework that has been set by the Ravenna Papyri, I will concentrate myself on certain specific issues, each of which has a substantive chapter to itself: The organization of agriculture in and around Ravenna as seen in the Ravenna Papyri, the social-structure that surrounds the landholding system in these papyri, and, lastly, the ways through which property was transferred from landowner to landowner. There is a reason, of course, that I have chosen for this specific sequence of topics, each of which ask several necessary and much needed questions, and not in another way. Before one can begin to debate social-structures in landholding systems, one must know how these landholdings were organized; before one wants to decipher how each piece of property was interchanged, how the circulation and distribution worked, one has to know who most of the actors are. Hopefully, after having reassessed each topic, we can perhaps answer the question: What kind of landowning system do we see in the Ravenna Papyri, in social-economic respect?

This particular group of papyri has some distinct advantages as historical source. For example, they give insight into the personal experience of all kinds of people from all kinds of classes, including some coming from the marginal parts of society about whom other types of documentation, for example fiscal records, have nothing to say. Also, the papyri refer to matters directly relevant to vital interests of the major part of the population, landholding, and consequently go to the heart of the mechanisms of society. The picture that emerges is in no way complete, but on the positive side, all evidence is linked to a specific time and place. In most cases there is a good indication of the socioeconomic status of the main participants, as well as a built-in check on the information provided, because all transactions involve more than one person, mostly witnesses, who confirm the social status of some landholders or peasants, and so on.

This analysis is, thus, not continuously driven forward by economic calculations, estimations and figuring, as is often the case in research on agricultural economies. Rather, I am of the opinion that we should look for the individual behind the texts, to see how his or her world looked due to certain economic qualifications and events. And, certainly, it would be a shame not to do this with these papyri, simply because they come from a period with remarkable social change. After the fall of the Roman Empire it was Italy, amongst other regions, that fell prey to numerous groups of outsiders, each of which tried to fight for their existence by

adjusting to the contemporaneous situation or by overthrowing it. In the case of the Ravenna Papyri we are not just dealing with Romans, which as a ‘people’ were still the major inhabitants of Italy, but with Goths and, as will be seen, with all kinds of other people as well.

This social-economic analysis requires a standard vocabulary. History, as is well known, uses an ‘ordinary-language’ vocabulary, with relatively little use of technical neologisms, unlike many other scientific disciplines. History, being not a very self-reflexive discipline, has developed technical meanings for certain words which vary greatly from one end of the discipline to the other; often fought over by practitioners (the debate on ‘feudal’ or ‘feudalism’ is such an argument, but there are, of course, many other contested words, such as *coloni*).<sup>12</sup> I do not believe that there are ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ examples of such usages and to check everyone systematically is not possible, anyway. All that one can do, when one uses words, is to have a clear and consistent idea of what they mean, and to explain them to the reader if necessary. I shall do this in different chapters, for the words *fundi*, peasant and (small, middle, large) landholder might seem easily recognizable and definable but they are often subject to discussion.

A final warning: This analysis is long enough, but it also treats a large amount of primary materials, often at much more restricted length than some experts in any given discipline are used to reading. Here, I use these materials to elucidate difference or sameness in the Ravenna Papyri, to show what is new and what is not. It is possible that experts – and you, the reader – know more about these individual pieces, and may well find my treatment of it superficial. I have, of course, elided much detail, while also trying to respect difference. For those readers that are not familiar with several of these primary sources I have added a small addendum that explains the abbreviations that are used, together with the place where they can be found.

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<sup>12</sup> Debate on ‘feudal or feudalism’: V. Shlapentokh, J. Woods (2011) 1-17; for debate on *coloni*, see: L. Migliorati (1976) 242-256; D. P. Kehoe (2007) 53-92.

# 1

## Economic aspects of the Ravenna Papyri:

### *Fundi, massae, size and wealth*

This chapter focuses on the organization of agricultural units, as seen from the standpoint of landowners. The Late Roman and post-Roman world was, of course, overwhelmingly an agrarian society; artisanal work was only a small portion of the total productive activity.<sup>13</sup>

The organization of agriculture has not been neglected by late Roman and early medieval historians. Far from it: It lies at the heart of almost all economic analyses of our period. One thing is, to many scholars, certain: The supposed systems that organized landholdings under Ostrogothic, Byzantine and Lombard rule were firmly based on an already existing Roman structure that was still around when the first Goths arrived. This idea is fully in line with the scholarly notion of the last decade that Ostrogothic, Byzantine and Lombard society was unconditionally impregnated from the start with Roman institutions such as a central administration, and also with political, social and cultural structures that can, perhaps exclusively, be associated with their Roman predecessors.<sup>14</sup> These societies existed and, perhaps, thrived on Roman leftovers. The production of coin in Italy by Odoacer, Theodoric and their successors; the use of central administrative structures such as courts and councils (the *curia*, for example); and the construction of clearly imperial Roman inspired buildings are all a testament to the alleged ‘imitation-culture’ that most scholars observe.<sup>15</sup>

Still, there are four authors in particular who have been at the forefront of the ‘agricultural organization debate’ for quite some time now. The first, Thomas Brown, has left us an exquisite survey of several important primary materials, and gives a rather exceptional perspective on (Italian) Byzantine agricultural organization. To him, almost all if not every agricultural unit was dispersed, and controlled by either the Church or powerful military

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<sup>13</sup> Kehoe (2013) 36, 37.

<sup>14</sup> Garipzanov (2008); M. F. Hendy (1988) 29-78; Hendy (2008) 395-398; M. Blackburn (2005) 660-674.

<sup>15</sup> G. P. Brogiolo (2007) 3-33; C. La Rocca (2001) 416-431; M. Johnson (1988) 73-96.

landowners. Only in the north of Italy did Brown see some smallholders surviving, though they were continuously threatened by larger agricultural aristocratic conglomerations.<sup>16</sup>

The second, Paolo Delogu, has constructed a similar image, one that is characterized by strong regionalization, both cultural and economic. Landholding, of both large and small proprietors, was regularly cut off from broader agricultural networks in Italy and the Mediterranean, reinforced by a period of prolonged deflation, a degraded urban fabric, and demographic decline.<sup>17</sup> His view is one of a slower moving agricultural crisis, rooted in the fifth century – though, to him, this was less evident in the countryside than it was in the cities.

The third, Chris Wickham, suggested that the landscapes of the West were invariably dominated by estates and small holdings ‘...that were secondary to state organization, where they existed at all.’<sup>18</sup> In the model that Wickham constructs the key variable is tax. To him, it was taxation that fed into the existence of a powerful central authority such as the Late Roman Empire, generating ‘spin offs’ in terms of market-integration in the economy across a wide range of territories, which bolstered the aristocracy through the enormous scale of political and economic integration that went with it. Apparently, it was the end of this ‘age of taxation’ that forged the history of the West for the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries. Following, it meant deepening fragmentation and more localized, defenseless elites; aristocracies became less and less important; each effect reinforcing the other.<sup>19</sup> Typical for Wickham is his strong emphasis on archaeological sources, with which he crafted a major breakthrough in the historiography of rural history.

The fourth and last author is Jairus Banaji. Of the four authors, he is the only one to specifically invest in the evidence from eastern late antique territories, with a specific emphasis on the organization of the Byzantine estate. The major conclusion of his analysis on agricultural organization is that the downfall of the Late Roman Empire changed almost every aspect of landholding, starting the rapid decline of the ‘old elites’ which had dominated urban and agrarian life in the earlier periods, and the emergence, gradually, especially in the course of the fifth century, of a new stratum of landowners who settled on enormous estates all over the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> T. S. Brown (1984) 190-204.

<sup>17</sup> P. Delogu (1994) 7-29.

<sup>18</sup> C. Wickham (2005) 514.

<sup>19</sup> Wickham (2005) 161.

<sup>20</sup> J. Banaji (2001) 6-23, 89-133; the observant reader will have noted that I have not included Neil Christie’s *Landscapes of Change: Rural evolutions in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot 2004). I have not done so for several reasons. First of all, the book focuses almost exclusively on archaeological evidence that originates from other regions than Italy. Secondly, the notion of agricultural organization is almost completely

From the perspective of Brown, Delogu, Wickham and Banaji there was not a sudden rise of dispersed landholdings; continuity is the key-word. Those who inhabited the landholdings might have changed, but the actual organization of these agricultural units stayed fairly the same, as it had been centuries before. There is a paradox in this. Although all of these authors are searching for change, they find themselves invested in a period that seems to be best characterized by cohesion, constancy and persistence.<sup>21</sup> It is very atypical, however, that the sources of these authors fit perfectly within their hypothesis and narration. The question then, of course, is how well these pieces represent what is actually the case. Do we see continuity because these authors have picked hundreds of (little) pieces that can only and exclusively fit within their framework of continuity? Or, is there in fact continuity? The truth is most likely in the middle, and it is at this point that the Ravenna Papyri can help us out. What is missing from Brown's, Delogu's, Wickham's and Banaji's accounts is a 'zoom-in', that give any sense of the scale of these landholdings, and their wealth. The Ravenna Papyri are such a 'zoom-in', focusing on a specific area, in a specific time-frame. If there is change, or continuity, we will most likely see it in these documents.

When it comes to defining the organization of agricultural units, however, the Ravenna Papyri are not a perfect source. As said in the introduction, one of the characterization of these papyri is that they are 'transactions' or 'receipts' of the past. One unfortunate side-effect, here, is the fact these papyri do not represent the full size of each landholding or estate. As is normal with transactions, the document only lists what is transacted, not the complete size of the owners' property. Certain estimations have to be taken, then, from other contemporaneous sources. This does not mean that we will fall back into the same paradoxical trap of the latter ancient and early-medieval historians: As long as we take the Ravenna Papyri as a (prime) guideline, we should be able to discover the correct denouement.

To get a sense of scale and wealth of these landholdings in the Ravenna Papyri several questions have to be asked, which are also the chapter's individual headings as the same time. First, a top-down view will be given that will distinguish most regional differences that we can see in these papyri, emphasizing specific social-economic trends. This is also the part where some attention will be given to the names and locations of these holdings, as these often provide valuable information about a specific piece of property. The second part gives a short

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absent in his graph, which makes it difficult to compare his findings to that of the other four authors. I am not doubting the importance of the work, or the evidence that it is used; it does not, however, fit in the grander debate.

<sup>21</sup> For their individual comments on this continuity, see: Brown (1984) 190; Delogu (1994) 27; Wickham (2005) 259; Banaji (2001) 257.

introduction on how to approach scale and wealth, subsequently commenting on former methods to estimate these variables. It will end with some rough estimations of wealth and size. The third section begins with some general remarks on the results acquired thus far, which is the product of some theorizations of the chapter before: Are they representative, or not? The idea is also to give some remarks on the fragmentation that we will see in the Ravenna Papyri, and the, presumably, existence of a land market. Under the fifth header a more broader question is central, namely where and when can we find other similar landholdings in the history of Late Antiquity, or how they are different from what we see in the Ravenna Papyri. Lastly, a short conclusion is given with some overall remarks on the evidence.

The evidence (see Appendix 1) that will be treated in this chapter strongly reminds us of the task of a bookkeeper: The recording of every transaction that seems noteworthy. Every document of the Ravenna Papyri corpus is, basically, a journal entry. As a bookkeeper you record each journal entry, and you have the decision of what account the entry goes to. At the end of it all, one totals the data in each journal to get to a conclusion. That is also how the next chapter should be seen: As the report of a numerous amount of entries from data sheets and accounts. A bookkeeper's report of the past.

### **1.1 *Fundi, massae*, names and locations: Regional trends and beyond**

The Roman system of *fundi* and *massae* was still in use at the time of the Ostrogothic invasion and settlement, and there seems to have been no urge to abolish it; at least, not that we know of. *Fundi* seem to have been fairly stable units, wearing permanent individual names, which were sometimes descriptive, but usually derived from an ancient owner – *Fundus Cornelianus* is the best-known form.<sup>22</sup> The Goths, Byzantines and Lombards did in no way change these names. They might not have deemed the naming of property interesting enough or, and this is a bit more plausible, the central administration benefitted greatly from it if the names were to stay the same. One can only image how extremely tiresome it must have been to keep up with the name of every piece of property, whatever the size or importance; and renaming them could certainly have made it worse. Another possibility is that in the case of some of these people, naturally with the Goths and Byzantines, names were not changed for a social-cultural reason: Roman treats were often deemed admirable, and the acquisition of a piece of Roman named property might as well have fastened their integration.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> R. Zimmerman (1996) 590; C. Francese (2007) 78-79.

<sup>23</sup> P. Heather (London 2013) 3; J. J. Arnold (2014) 140; M. Vitiello (2014) 79.

The *fundus* was not an inseparable unit. Common landowners, or poor farmers who only owned one small piece of land could divide it between their heirs; or, might sell off a bit if they were in debt. Landholders that underwent better conditions bought these small pieces and, eventually, owned a patchwork of pieces that were not necessarily attached to each other. Rather, most landed property of small and middle owners was most likely smeared out over a large area, with only the central village or town as a tenacious factor; in the Ravenna Papyri most of the transactions are in small fractions of *fundi*, a half, a third, a sixth or even an eighth; a testimony to the fragmentation in the area.<sup>24</sup>

Richer Romans, or Goths, who owned several *fundi*, had less reason to subdivide an individual farm, and the richest, including royals such as Odoacer, Theodoric, and the great Churches, who owned many, grouped them into the unit of *massae*.<sup>25</sup> *Massae*, like *fundi*, were not of standard size. Rather, *massae* were a group of *fundi* under one management. It is quite unclear how these *massae* were organized, in judicial and organizational terms.<sup>26</sup> Most logically would be that the overarching owner, a wealthy aristocrat or landowner would set up a centralized system to check the individual pieces; this would have been the case just before the arrival of the Ostrogoths, and the papyri do not give any hints towards possible differences or changes in the periods thereafter. Whatever the case, the large *massa* in *P. Ital. 17* (Signia) which was given to a church in Rome, consisted of 31 complete *fundi*, the halves of two others and the third of another. These papyri suggest that there were at any rate some kind of enclaves in the block: There is no doubt that the three fragmentary *fundi* had already been split up before some richer landowners acquired them, and apparently, they had not been able to buy up the odd bits just yet.<sup>27</sup>

*Massae* seem to have been fairly stable units, which acquired permanent names, usually formed like those of *fundi* from the name of the original owner, but they might naturally be divided up again. In 533 AD, seen in *P. Ital. 13*, a noble but illiterate Gothic couple named Felithanc and Ranilo (or Felithan and Runilo) gave the church of Ravenna the half of two *massae*, one in the territory of Urbinum and the other in that of Lucca. In a similar fashion, Odoacer, who had promised pieces of land to the annual value of 690 *solidi* to the *vir illustrius* Pierrius, first gave him the island of Melitta in Dalmatia (in the Adriatic Sea) and a piece of the *massa* Pyramitana in the territory of Syracuse. When Pierrius asked for the remaining *fundi* (he

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<sup>24</sup> *P. Ital. 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37 and 38-41.*

<sup>25</sup> A. H. M. Jones (1964) 786.

<sup>26</sup> One of the best interpretations belongs to J. O. Tjäder. See: Tjäder (1982) 30 (10), 44 (2).

<sup>27</sup> A similar system we do also see in *P. Ital. 1*, wherein several *fundi* are part of a larger *massae*, which altogether forms up the *Patrimonium* of one Lauricius.

had received lands to the annual value of 650 *solidi*, not 690), he was given the *fundus* Aemilianus, the rest of the *fundus* Dubli and part of the *fundus* Putaxiae, all out of the same *massa* Pyramitana.<sup>28</sup>

The *massae* and *fundi* are the only sub-divisions employed for administrative purposes in the Ravenna Papyri, but we occasionally find other words used to describe fields and villages or other agricultural settlements. The word *casale* or *casa* is, for instance, frequently employed: *P. Ital. 17* speaks of the *Casa Porcinare*, *Casa Viti*, *Casa Lari*, *Casa Basili*, *Casa Gini*, and even of *Tris Casas*, and in *P. Ital. 35* the writer speaks of *Casale Basianum*. A *casa* was, most likely, equivalent to a farm or a group of farms (*Tris Casas*) on which the houses of the cultivators were gathered into a scattered village with some protection in the form of walls or ramparts and resembled the later *domusculta*; but while the *domusculta* was always an artificial foundation the *casales* were natural growths. Interestingly, often the term seems to be used to refer to farm buildings or dwellings of the *coloni*.<sup>29</sup> More surprising, however, is the title of the *fundus* in *P. Ital. 31*, where the property carries the name of a numeral: *Centum Viginti Quinque*, or one-hundred-twenty-five. The name could refer to the annual rent that the property brought up (it is definitely not the value of the price as the document already states that the *fundus*, together with another, has a price of 40 *solidi*), but it is more likely that the number exemplifies the distance from the property to Rome.<sup>30</sup> Some *massae* could also have designatory names: Pyramitana, the name that is given to one of the *massae* in *P. Ital. 10-11*, refers to an ancient burial monument close to the island of Tapso.<sup>31</sup> This piece of property, we can presume, was most likely situated quite close to the ancient site. Only one papyrus reminds us of the possibility that a property could be named after a forest: *P. Ital. 3* speaks of the *fundus Saltus Erudianus* – ‘the forest of Erudianus’.<sup>32</sup>

In any attempt to examine agrarian organization in the Ravenna Papyri, and its period, a distinction has to be drawn between the North, where small fragmented properties seem to have prevailed, and the South and the islands (Sicily and the island of Melitta), where property was divided into larger *massae*, worked as domains by tied tenants who paid fixed rents.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the Ravenna Papyri concentrate generally on (sometimes very) small *fundi*, sometimes groups

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<sup>28</sup> *P. Ital. 10-11*; for discussions on this famous papyrus, see: A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale (1980) 855, 886; D. Vera (1999) 991-1025; L. Malerba (1968) 5.

<sup>29</sup> Banaji (2001) 208.

<sup>30</sup> M. Matheus (2000) 190.

<sup>31</sup> M. Melotti (2002-2003) 54.

<sup>32</sup> Jones (1964) 806; R. J. Buck (1983) 10, 15; naming *fundi* after forests is not an anomaly. For late antique North Africa we possess similar occurrences. See: Kehoe (1988) 199-201.

<sup>33</sup> *P. Ital. 1, 2, 3, 10-11*.



of *fundi* that are part of larger *massae*, but only in two occasions on very large blocks of land, namely in *P. Ital. 10-11* and *17*. This is striking, for in another source the image is quite different. In the letters of Pope Gregory, the emphasis is on extensive landholdings and we have little to no confirmation of smaller estates in the North.<sup>34</sup>

There is, however, also one similarity: In the area of Rome large landholdings seemed to have prevailed for a while. This we see in the Ravenna Papyri (*P. Ital. 17*, and perhaps *P. Ital. 21*, but it is not clear how big the area must have been), but also in the *Liber Censuum Romanæ Ecclesiæ*, where we see leases issued by Popes that include a grant of the whole area from the *Porta Flaminia* to the Milvian Bridge by Honorius I, the lands of a monastery granted by Gregory II for the large rent of 108 *solidi*, and a *massa* that consisted of ten consecutive *fundi*.<sup>35</sup> When the documentation becomes more abundant, and later, however, we find that large grants are made to men of standing but these consist of a number of very small dispersed units rather than the large cohesive groupings.<sup>36</sup> Eventually, then, the situation around Rome and the rest of the north (if we accept the evidence that is given in the Ravenna Papyri) ended up similarly.

This pattern of dispersion and fragmentation can in part be attributed to the practice of partible inheritance. We will say more about this practice in Chapter 3. But, at this point, it certainly suggests that even though the rich elite (or at least those wealthy enough to buy several plots of property) were in a position to obtain several holdings by buying up or appropriating the properties of their ‘poor’ neighbors, they remained fairly content, apparently, to draw their income from rights over a bunch of small and scattered (peasant) holdings. And, larger units only become common in the tenth and eleventh centuries as a result of *incastellamento*, clearances, and the rationalization of landed wealth.<sup>37</sup>

Evidence outside from the Ravenna Papyri shows that this pattern continued to play an important role: In the *Codex traditionum Ecclesiae Ravennatis* we see that though in the early ninth century the widow of a *magister militum* acquired three contiguous landholdings near Iesi, most of the officials who received land from the Church of Ravenna obtained small scattered estates; Maurice, *magister militum* of Rimini around 769 AD, is recorded as obtaining three separate grants embracing a *sors*, two *fundi*, a part of a *casale* and a two-storeyed house; in the same collection we see an exarch acquiring several separate properties in emphyteutis

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<sup>34</sup> *GR* iv, 21, 41; can also be seen in *CJ* xi48.11, and *CJC*, ii, 441.

<sup>35</sup> *LC* 351-2 (*JE* 2032); *LC* i, 352 (*JE* 2216); can also be seen in *GR* XIV. 14.

<sup>36</sup> *LP* i, 434-435; *LP* i, 505.

<sup>37</sup> P. Toubert (1973) 455-456.

from the Church for a rent of seven *solidi* (which is quite low); a donation of uncertain date involves the grant of thirteen farms to a monastery in Padua; a document of 670 AD lists a number of *casalia* near Cesena leased to high officials by the Church of Grado; and an inscription in the Church of S. Apollinare in Classe records a donation made by archbishop John VI of a farm near Ravenna in exchange for two others near Faenza and Imola.<sup>38</sup>

Hence, all evidence points towards a picture of small, medium and large landowners possessing a range of scattered estates. A major theme, then, seems to be that of a continued importance of dispersed landholdings. It is clear from the Ravenna Papyri that in the settlement areas in the northern and central parts of Italy, landholdings were separated – and shortly before the Gothic arrival, this had been the case as well. It is, in any case, not a sudden rise of disparate landholdings, or a sudden collapse of an ‘older’ and ‘larger’ landowning system; fragmentation had been there, probably for quite some time, and in some areas (around Rome), it gradually took over.<sup>39</sup> In the south, however, the evidence does not show the same: There, so it seems, large estates worked by tied tenants and slaves stayed dominant. This might be a result of the one-sidedness of the sources, or it could have simply been the case. The fact that the area around Rome shows both, however, and for some considerable time, suggests that both types of landholdings existed closely near each other.

We should, however, be careful where and when we draw the line for the latter picture. Although the landholdings are dispersed in the areas that are attested in the Ravenna Papyri, and came to be in other areas as well, we should obviously restrict this episode to the Italian mainland and stop at the ninth century.<sup>40</sup> From the evidence, thus far, large landowners seem not have been able to possess landholdings in other regions outside from Italy in, for instance, other parts of the Mediterranean; the furthest possessions that we see are retained to Sicily, and some islands in the Adriatic Sea.<sup>41</sup> This is a complete contrast to the wide possessions that we see just before the Ostrogothic invasion. Before the invasions of the west, landlords, both great and small, rarely owned a single consolidated estate. Their possessions were usually scattered and consisted of a number of farms, some larger, some smaller.<sup>42</sup> But, before the arrival of the Gothic tribes in northern Italy, great landlords, and the *res privata*, owned besides some large blocks of territory, mostly ancient royal lands, and countless estates which had been accrued to

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<sup>38</sup> In the same order: *CB* 27, 32, 34, 35, 39, 43, 46, 49, 82; *P. Dip.* 132; *CDI* a. 670. For a commentary on these holdings: A. Guillou (1969) 53.

<sup>39</sup> Landholding before fifth century Italy: Wickham (1981) 93.

<sup>40</sup> T. S. Brown, among others, is of the opinion that after the ninth century the evidence becomes too different from any late antique influence. See Brown (1984) 196-197; also, Wickham (1981) 113.

<sup>41</sup> *P. Ital.* 1, 10-11 A-B.

<sup>42</sup> B. Lancon (2001) 64.

it by bequest, escheat or confiscation. This occurred in every province and in almost every city. Formerly, the churches of Ravenna, but also those in Rome and other cities, acquired donations and bequests of far-flung estates. In the fourth century, so do several sources tell us, the Church of Ravenna held estates in Italy, but also two large groups in Sicily (alike *P. Ital. 10-11*), seven blocks in Achaëa, as well as a number of lands in the East at Antioch, Tarsus, Alexandria, Tyre, Cynus and elsewhere.<sup>43</sup> The estates of great landlords were, before the fifth century, also often scattered over many provinces, and located far away from the original proprietor. Symmachus in his letters mentions twelve villas which he owned in various parts of Italy, and speaks of his lands in Samnium, Apulia, Sicily and Mauretania.<sup>44</sup> The biographer of Melania draws a vivid picture of her making a leisurely progress from Rome to Carthage, systematically selling her estates in Campania, Apulia, Sicily, Africa, Numidia and Mauretania; she also owned lands in Spain, which were at the moment unsaleable owing to the barbarian invasions and even, we are told, in Britain.<sup>45</sup>

The situation that the biographer of Melania describes – that of barbarian invasions threatening ties between lands of landowners – seems to have been the case after the Ostrogothic invasion in Italy as well. From the Ravenna Papyri there is no direct evidence that landlords owned property outside Italy, Sicily or Sardinia. That both *P. Ital. 13* and *Greg. Ep. XIV. 14* show that the Church of Ravenna had lands in Bononia, Urbinum, Lucca, Forum Corelli, Ariminum, Agubium and Sicily, but not in the provinces of, for example, Africa or Asia seems therefore to be no surprise. Similarly, the letters of Cassiodorus, Justinian's books of law, and the *Codex Theodorici* – though this is, perhaps, not the place to look – do not comment on possessions that can be located outside the Italian mainland and its islands.

In the West the large incursions by Germanic bands may have been a crucial episode in the break-up and eventual disintegration of overseas and widely distributed land-economies.<sup>46</sup> Goths, Vandals, Suevians, Burgundians and Allans all seized or claimed and were yielded land on which to settle.<sup>47</sup> Where in former times, under a united Roman imperial banner, possessions of greater large landowners were protected by steadfast imperial armies, now Visigoths, Vandals, Franks, and Bretons roamed. Thus: The possessions of most rich landowners were constricted to the borders of each individual kingdom, and in the case of northern and central

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<sup>43</sup> Jones (1964) 782.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, 783; Symmachus *Ep.* 5.93, 7.24.

<sup>45</sup> Ger., *Vita Melaniae Junioris* 7, 11, 14, 19; Lancon (2001) 64.

<sup>46</sup> P. Heather, J. F. Matthews (1991) 17-26.

<sup>47</sup> S. Mitchells (2007) 207-237.

Italian landowners to the borders of Ostrogothic Italy, Byzantine Italy and, to some extent, Lombard Italy.

Also, large and scattered complexes were, perhaps, more vulnerable to the dishonesty and inefficiency of their administrators, unrest among slaves and alienation by neighbors. We should not forget that the insecurity and political divisions brought about by the Gothic Wars and the Lombard invasions undoubtedly added to the difficulties of administering remote or scattered estates, although estates in Sicily would be managed more easily because of their relative ease of sea communications. Indeed, there is enough evidence in the Ravenna Papyri for bands of (Gothic) warriors severing long-distance ties: In *P. Ital. 12* we see several Gothic soldiers encroaching upon the property of a (rich) widow, and in *P. Ital. 49* we see the Goth Gundila trying to regain property that he had lost to ravenous neighbors. Thus, not only long-distance ties in the sense of the Mediterranean world were cut, but also regionally.

## **1.2 Economic theories, and guessing the variables: Scale and Wealth**

It is hard to direct agriculture without some form of accounting. What is the rent from this field or this holding? Has it been paid in full? Or, how big is this field? How small? Although earlier in this chapter these adverbs (small, big, wealthy etcetera) gave some clarity to the overall picture of landed property in the Ravenna Papyri, they do not make it comparable to the mind. Most importantly, at the moment we will not be able to compare other landowning systems known from Late Antiquity to what we see in the Ravenna Papyri. The aim now is to theorize a solution to this problem; to find a model with which we can make those comparisons.

First of all, we have to know how we can use the unit of *fundus*, or *massa*, and check if it is usable for an economic analysis. The *fundus*, or a *massa*, was primarily a managerial or bookkeeping unit, a 'unit of ownership'. In economic terms this means that the *fundi* in the Ravenna Papyri must be interpreted as a concept which denotes that the owner (or owners) received an income from it. The word itself says nothing, however, about the way that the income is obtained, i.e. nothing about the manner of exploitation. Direct exploitation and leasing are both possible, and in both cases the *fundus* as a whole can be involved, or small allotments which could be part of this *fundus*. Perhaps, on a greater scale this could also be the case with *massae*, wherein certain *fundi* had a particular job. It is, in any case, an economic unit only insofar as the yields of the *fundus* or *massa* as a whole were entered in the bookkeeping under one heading.

*Fundus*, or *massa*, could have only the latter restricted connotation. It is, however, also possible that a *fundus* was a 'unit of production' as well. This implies nothing about the structure

of the fundus or *massa*, however: The 'unit of production' could still coincide with the 'unit of ownership', but the 'unit of ownership' could also consist of several 'units of production'. The substance of the *fundus* as an economic unit in the Ravenna Papyri is therefore highly variable. One general characteristic, however, is that the *fundi* that are attested are always a separate economic unit: It was always a separate entry in an account, or accounts. This means that a *fundus* which was a 'unit of production' was always independent in the sense that, whether it was or was not part of an adjoining complex of *fundi*, it nevertheless did not, or did not completely, form simply one 'unit of production' together with the other *fundi* in the complex.<sup>48</sup>

The latter is confirmed in the entirety of the Ravenna Papyri: Although several fundi, some dispersed and some not, are named in a consecutive order, the gain from it, in this case solely in *solidi*, is noted separately. The sizes are also, if noted at all, always shown as part of a whole, but never fixed to it, with a compatible variable.<sup>49</sup> This system of notation that uses 'units of production' thus has several advantages for the scholar: It notes most variables of wealth, size and so on, accordingly to each piece of property.

It is not really necessary to stress the importance of every variable: Wealth, for instance, speaks for itself.<sup>50</sup> The importance of size, however, and how to approach it, often lacks in economic analyses. The size of each individual property says a lot about the political and social flows of the time, but especially the economical one. First of all, it increases the chance that a farmer or landholder will use crop diversification. The increase in size of each landholding, or the accumulation of several disparate landholdings, means that at some point there is land 'extra'. On this piece of land, the farmer can decide how many crops to grow on the basis of his or her production-decisions.<sup>51</sup> Second, the economic attributes that landholders possess are strongly associated with the size of each landholding, but also the way in which agricultural production processes are organized, and levels of intensification.<sup>52</sup> The size of the landholding, then, is the main distinction between rural agricultural producers that differentiate small, middle, or large-scale farmers.

Hence, landholding size by itself is a powerful variable and indication that allows for separating the attributes of two quite different groups of rural producers. Third, size changes

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<sup>48</sup>For other arguments on the status of *fundi* and *massae*, see: E. Migliario (1992) 371; Vera (1995) 189-331; P. De Neeve (1984) 3.

<sup>49</sup>*P. Ital. 1* and *2* are in this case two very effective examples: Both have two columns that list the name of the *massa* or *fundi*, and the number of *solidi* brought up. In other papyri these columns are often damaged or left out.

<sup>50</sup>For the importance of wealth for agricultural units, see:

<sup>51</sup>The term 'production decisions' in the context of Late Antiquity has only appeared sporadically. See: M. Silver (1995) 141; P. L. Kohl (2014) 11.

<sup>52</sup>D. Riggs (2001) 288.; S. F. Johnson (2012) 1116; R. C. Hoffmann (1975) 64; G. W. Bowersock, P. R. L. Brown, O. Grabar (1999) 453.

the trajectory that each landholding takes. For small holdings, there is no single dominant land-use trajectory. Forests or marshes cleared for agriculture may remain for a couple of years under temporal crops, or it may be converted to pasture after the first year to avoid forest or other natural succession. In other cases, the landscape is allowed to ‘regrow’, if we can call it that, once the soil is exhausted with temporal crops.

This diversity in circumstances is due to the fact that small farmers often choose diversified systems of agricultural intensification, as a way to secure their livelihood. In turn, these pieces of diversified land will leave imprints in the agricultural landscape which consist of numerous dispersed and small patches of land and cleared areas. Sometimes they will sell what is ‘extra’, but most often they will not, saving it for later times.<sup>53</sup> The large-scale landholder has different motivations: He or she will try to achieve the largest economic benefits. This type of landholders is often better connected to markets, and generally they hire labor forces.<sup>54</sup> They will try to buy up the odd bits that are closely to them, and these individual larger holdings are often far better connected to each other than smaller dispersed ones.<sup>55</sup> And, naturally, these large estates often possess a far bigger hinterland or outlet than their smaller counterparts, which supports and manifests in all kinds of economic activity.<sup>56</sup>

Although the variables of size and wealth are attested in the Ravenna Papyri, they are not shown, unfortunately, in complete abundance; or at least not in a continuous presence.<sup>57</sup> Apart from the fact that this says a lot about the importance of each variable for the notitioner, this has implications for an economic survey of these documents as well.<sup>58</sup> Namely, that there is a dearth of evidence, and that this could obstruct further investigations. But, the latter problem has always been true for the search of actual economic patterns in Late Antiquity, especially the west, and it has, in any case, produced a fine array of methods and models.<sup>59</sup> In 2015 Kyle Harper revived several options to tackle the problem that he calls ‘the average size problem’, though he tried to fix problems of conversion of evidence restricted to rents, yield and income as well. These approaches (see: Table 1) were basically re-used from earlier works, with Duncan-Jones and A. H. M. Jones having the most feasible and well-known projections and

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<sup>53</sup> Banaji (2015) 159.

<sup>54</sup> Grey (2012) 605; Banaji (2015) 161; A. Cameron (1993) 89.

<sup>55</sup> Examples for a better connectivity could be evidence from the Fayum: Banaji (2001) 214; Bowersock, Brown, (1999) 433; evidence for the west (Italy, France) can be found in: G. P. Brogiolo, N. Gauthier, N. Christie (2000) 143.

<sup>56</sup> Brogiolo, Gauthier, Christie (2000) 143; M. Decker (2007) 65.

<sup>57</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>58</sup> On the writers of the Ravenna Papyri, see: N. J. Adams (2013) 79.

<sup>59</sup> See Table 1 for each model; in consecutive order: R. Duncan-Jones (1990); Jones (1964) 778-784; L. Ruggini (1961) 55; J. M. Carrié (1997) 124.

methods. But, and this is what Harper concluded as well, each of them is highly imperfect and entails different empirical and/or conceptual weaknesses.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, if we decided to set loose these methods on the Ravenna Papyri, they would use variables that are unpredictable and, most importantly, lead to an ever-engrossing possibility of errors the further the calculation goes. It is, then, better to keep ourselves to broad estimations of the available economic units. In the same spirit, in an ideal world we would answer the first question by performing the sort of audit of wealth and income which Scheidel and Friesen, or Bagnall, or others, have offered to elucidate the aggregate patterns of land tenure and to calculate an Italy wide ‘Gini-coefficient’. But again, this is obviously not possible, so in the real world we must take the imperfect and scattered data of the Ravenna Papyri that we have and make the most of them.<sup>61</sup>

Method 1: Average Income Conversion Ratio (flaw: dependent on land price)
Assume income of 6%
Multiply income in solidi x 100/6 for wealth value
Divide by av. land price, 5–10 solidi per iug. → 1.67–3.33 iug./sol.
Method 2: Apion Income Conversion Ratio (flaw: single, disputable comparison)
Multiply income in solidi x income rate of Apions → 1.92 iug./sol.
Method 3: Average Yield Conversion Ratio (flaw: yields, grain prices all uncertain)
Make defensible assumptions about average yields
Subtract seed, taxes, and subsistence consumption = net surplus
Multiply av. net surplus in grain x grain prices → 1.67–3.33 iug./sol.
Method 4: Average Rental Income Ratio (flaw: exclusively Egyptian)
Three types of rental attested in Egypt: fixed cash, fixed kind, share
Search for av. rent on property (c.45 sol./iug) → 2.2 iug./sol.

**Table 1: The four methods used to calculate average property size, wealth and yield**

Two pieces of evidence provide some direct information about property-size. Both come from the sixth century and from the area of Faenza. In the first piece, *P. Ital. 30*, the Goth Thulgilo, his wife Domnica and their son Deutherius sell a piece of land, noted as being as large as twenty *iugera*, with an annual income of 110 gold *solidi*. The second piece, *P. Ital. 31*, is a bill of sale from Faenza as well, but concerns another owner: Domnicus. He sells two pieces of land, two *fundi*, with a size of seven *iugera* for 40 gold *solidi*. Following, this means that: 1 *iugera* costs, approximately,  $(40/7) \approx 5.714$  *solidi*; and 1 *iugera* gives, approximately,  $(110/20) \approx 5.5$  *solidi* as income (rent). There is a good reason, of course, that both the *iugera* per income are required, as well as the *iugera* per price: Namely, half of the papyri do have a given rent or

<sup>60</sup> K. Harper (2015) 54-55.

<sup>61</sup> W. Scheidel, S. J. Friesen (2006) 61-91; Bagnall (1992) 128-149.

income per year, but not a price, and the other half has the price, but not the rent (see Appendix 1).

But, then there is, naturally, the question if the latter results are representative and can be used to define the larger picture. In the case of land-prices we should certainly be concerned with the option these changed over time. 5.714 is probably a bit too high in nominal terms, for one reason: By the sixth century land prices had probably fallen in the west – apparently wheat prices had.<sup>62</sup> Hence, it is certainly possible that the price plummeted a bit towards the seventh and eight centuries, if we would accept the narrative of decline that is so often accepted for the western Mediterranean world. Harper, in 2015, even went so far to say that the variable of land-price should be extended to 7.9 *solidi* per *iugera*; this he concluded with the Apion estates in mind. But, even though the Apion estates fall (approximately) in line with the period we are looking at, it is situated in a completely different domain, and on so many levels.<sup>63</sup> As a result, and in accordance of what we know of the price of land in the west thus far, we should settle for the variable of 5 *solidi*; i.e. not too low and not too high. Of course, if we consider the idea of rising or falling land-prices, we should definitely think about broadening the variable of rent as well. Income in rent, however, was often fixed by the landowner for a long time.<sup>64</sup> If we would change the variable to what Harper uses (1.67-3.33 *solidi* per *iugera*), it would have an enormous effect on the result, and he gets his variable from two eastern holdings.<sup>65</sup> Again, just like the usage of the Apion estates when calculating the price of land, it is hard to believe that this can be representative for the late antique West; something closer to the Ravenna Papyri makes much more sense, hence the use of *P. Ital. 30*. The results, of the suggested property size for every fundus or *massa*, can be seen in Table 2 and 3.

**Table 2 Price of land and suggested property size**

P. Ital. nr:	Name fundus/massa:	Price (in gold solidi):	Suggest. size( <i>iugera</i> ):
22	Terriaticus	36	≈ 7,2

<sup>62</sup> Banaji (2001) 85-86; Bagnall (1993) 36; W. Bowden, A. Gutteridge, C. Machado (2006) 91.

<sup>63</sup> Harper (2015). It is not strange that Harper uses the Apion estates as well, as his aim is to find the average landholding size in the entire Mediterranean region. For late antique Italy, however, this does not work: The Apion estates are inexplicably different when it comes to management, size and social-political influence. For an exquisite work on the Apion estates, see: Rathbone (1991).

<sup>64</sup> Some leases were fixed for 29 or 30 consecutive years. See: Brown (1984) 200; Grey (2012) 635.

<sup>65</sup> Harper (2015) 55.



31	Domicilius	≈ 20	≈ 3.5 <sup>66</sup>
31	CentumViginti quinque	≈ 20	≈ 3.5
32	Roborata	5 1/3	≈ 1,07
33	Domitianus	20	≈ 4
34	-	120	≈ 24
34	-	60	≈ 12
35	Custinis	≈ 5	≈ 1
35	Casale Basianum	≈ 5	≈ 1
36	Genicianus	24	≈ 4.18
37	Genicianus	24	≈ 4.18
42	-	≈ 10	≈ 2
43	Raunis	130	≈ 26
46	-	30	≈ 6

**Table 3 Income of land and suggested property size**

P. Ital. nr.:	Name fundus/massa:	Income (solidi/year):	Suggest. Size (iugera):
1	Enporitana	756	≈ 137.45
1	Anniana or Myrtus	222	≈ 40, 36
1	Apera	52	≈ 9.45
1	Callius	200	≈ 36.,36
1	Fadilianensis	445	≈ 80.91
1	Cassitana	500	≈ 90.91
3	Saltus Erudianus	≈ 3	≈ 0.55
3	-	≈ 4	≈ 0.73
3	Noviciana	≈ 3	≈ 0.55

<sup>66</sup> The dark gray pieces of the table represent- and are a reminder to- the papyri that have been used to calculate the suggested sizes.

3	Noviciana	≈ 3	≈ 0.55
3	Simpliciaca or Candidiana	≈ 4	≈ 0.73
3	Valeriaca	≈ 4	≈ 0.73
3	Severiaca	≈ 5	≈ 0.91
3	Micauri	≈ 6	≈ 1.09
3	Pampiliana	≈ 3	≈ 0.55
10-11	Pyramitana	450	≈ 81.82
10-11	Melita	200	≈ 36.36
10-11	Aemilianus	18	≈ 3.27
10-11	Budius	≈ 15	≈ 2.73
10-11	Potaxia	7	≈ 1.27
13	Firmidiana	100	≈ 18.18
30	Concordiacus	110	20

### 1.3 Reassessing the results: Representability

When sample surveys as these are carried out it is frequently necessary to reweigh the data collected to eliminate aberrations and thus ensure that the results are representative for the group as a whole. This means that we will be effectively linking data collected from the papyri in table 2 and 3, and so are able to reweigh the evidence to ensure the representativeness of the resultant data sets. Simply said, the aim is now to give meaning to the names and numbers that have been given above.

Keeping the results in mind, even if we would suppose that the price and rent of landed property rose considerably over the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries, there nevertheless seems to be a complete overweight of landholdings under the bar of 20 *iugera*. This becomes even more evident if we decide to put each landholding in its separate class, using *iugera* as a denominator (see Table 4). We are, then, not even counting the larger *massae* as one, but including all of their separate *fundi*. It is questionable, however, if this rightly represents the distribution of property and therefore wealth. If we are to believe Table 4, we would expect there to be one large homogenous group of very small landowners, who owned more or less the

same. From the papyri we know that there was, in fact, a far greater variety in wealth than the results show. Some proprietors were wealthy enough to own slaves, or a team of plow-oxen.<sup>67</sup> Others brought to a tenancy arrangement little more than their own labor and that of their families. Or tenants were debtors of their landlord, working off a debt incurred.<sup>68</sup>

Size class (in <i>iugera</i> ):	Number of <i>P. Ital.</i> properties:
1-9,9	24
10-19,9	2
20-49,9	6
50-99,9	3
> 100	1

**Table 4** Amount of properties per class

Furthermore, the distribution of holdings and the distribution of landed wealth are not necessarily identical. Some land is inherently better, and some has a more valuable working capital in buildings and equipment added to it.<sup>69</sup> The rural population, which works the land, will see a major distinction between those whose income depends solely on labor-hired hands, and those who own land. Within the latter group, landed wealth will be the largest single component in inequalities of income.<sup>70</sup> Of course, the rentier class will have a still higher correlation between wealth and income, since their own labor is not involved.

And there are more peculiarities that remain hidden, perhaps ambiguous. For instance, the results say almost nothing about the actual size of the property that each proprietor cultivated. Aside from the fact that we know these *iugera* to be been part of a bigger whole, it cannot be the case that most of these landowners owned less than 20 *iugera*. 20 *iugera* is, as we know, barely enough to sustain a normal household.<sup>71</sup> If we would think that each of these landholdings had one single owner and urge that they sustained themselves solely from these small pieces (of which some of them are around 1 or 3 *iugera*!), these proprietors must have starved or sold themselves into service; such small pieces of land are, in any case, not to be

<sup>67</sup> For slaves: *P. Ital.* 9, 13, 14-15, 17, 21; for plow of oxen: *P. Ital.* 8.

<sup>68</sup> For example: In *P. Ital.* 3 we see renderings in kind, labor services and cash payments in *xenias* in the Padua area; *P. Ital.* 21. for debts.

<sup>69</sup> Banaji (2001) 85.

<sup>70</sup> L. J. Hall (2001) 67.

<sup>71</sup> A small family subsistence farm, although smaller land allotments are well attested was in the order of 10-20 *iugera*. One *iugerum* is equal to 0.2518 hectares, coming from the most recent calculations. What the perfect amount of land is remains, unfortunately, unclear. Cato, for example, says an ideal farm is 100 *iugera*, Saserna talks of a 200 *iugera* arable farm; as does Columella, who analyses a 7 *iugera* vineyard. See Cato, *De Agricultura*, 11.1, (for Saserna) Varro, *De Re Rustica*, 1.19.1, Columella, *Res Rustica*, 2.12.7.

lived off. Luckily, there is enough evidence that makes us believe that this was actually not the case.

Just as a landlord might rent more than one farmer, or tenant if you will, some of the farmers in the Ravenna Papyri leased from one than one landowner; hence cultivating several pieces of land, not just one.<sup>72</sup> And, those who were the sole owner of their property regularly owned more than one piece.<sup>73</sup> The latter creates several benefits for the peasant: First, it facilitated the fragmentation of land, and therefore minimized the risk that a natural disaster, or something else, would completely destroy all of the farmer's crops; second, it widened the pool of individuals who could be approached if farmers wanted to pick up an additional wage labor at certain times of the year.<sup>74</sup>

Moreover, it is quite clear from the papyri that these landowners could afford to sell or donate a piece of their property without coming into economic danger. Most of the proprietors in these papyri had other professions as well: Some earned their money by making tights, others manufactured soap, and we can even distinguish several bankers.<sup>75</sup> These small parts of land represented, for most of these individuals at least, a small investment, or a quick way to earn money in times of emergency.<sup>76</sup> Thus, even if there was deficiency in income from smallholdings, whether newly created or long-established, this was often made good by secondary employment.

The list suggests that a considerable amount of land changed hands over a fairly short period of time, which perhaps points to an active market in land which affected small, medium and large landholders. The scale of the transactions was, in any case, tiny. And it seems to have been a stable. Many landholdings came into the hands of the Church, occasionally in the hands of some larger landowners, in the space of a generation or so, but most of these landowners, though consistently acquiring land from others, only obtained one or two *fundi* or *massae* at a time.<sup>77</sup> Sometimes such fields adjoined the owner's land, a good indication of some sort of

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<sup>72</sup> *P. Ital.* 1, 3.

<sup>73</sup> *P. Ital.* 4-5, 6, 7, 8, 10-11, 12, 13, 14-15, 17, 18-19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38-41, 43, 44, 49; see also Appendix 1.

<sup>74</sup> *P. Ital.* 30

<sup>75</sup> Tights manufacturer: *P. Ital.* 14-15; soap manufacturer: *P. Ital.* 33; bankers: *P. Ital.* 29, and *P. Ital.* 38-41.

<sup>76</sup> In *P. Ital.* 33 Isacius, the soap maker, invests in a piece of land. He thinks the investment to be a stable investment; in *P. Ital.* 33 and 34 the cleric Minullus sells a piece of land, to earn a quick number of *solidi*.

<sup>77</sup> Into the hands of the Church: *P. Ital.* 3, 13, 14-15, 17, 18-19, 20, 21, 22, 23; into the hands of large landowners: *P. Ital.* 1, 10-11; for the rest of the papyri it remains ambiguous how influential and 'large' these landowners must have been, but the fact that they have quite honest occupations (artisans) as a second profession or can be associated with a simple bureaucratic or military office, makes me believe that most of them consists of small- to middle-large landowners; see also Chapter 2.

accumulation, but often not.<sup>78</sup> No family surrendered all its land to a richer landowner, though such tremendous gifts were, most likely, regularly left to the church by testament.<sup>79</sup> Some individuals appear fleetingly in these texts, but there is no sign of them going under.

Of course, this dynamic must have differed for each area, period and action. For instance, a large landlord who wishes to sell a large amount of land will find it less costly to bargain over the price with a single buying partner who is looking for a large purchase rather than to bargain with multiple small buyers. In the latter case, the transaction costs will, of course, include multiple bargaining costs.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, if one individual aimed to assemble a large contiguous block of holdings, he would most likely have to confront a large number of high transaction costs, perhaps even including hold-out costs, if he attempted to assemble this holding through multiple small transactions.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, contracts that were commissioned by these estates were either short-or long-term, although what little evidence we have from other papyri suggests a preference for long-term pledges.<sup>82</sup> It could certainly have been the case, then, that the steady amount of transactions that we see in the papyri coming from northern landholdings might have been opposite to the south; there, perhaps, such transactions occurred less often.

#### 1.4 Comparisons in the broader sense

On a much larger scale, the Ravenna Papyri are part of an enormous puzzle. Namely, the evidence presented thus far is part of several inquiries that ask how landholdings were organized, how big they were, and how wealthy their proprietors became. In the last decades a lot of new evidence has come to see the light, and most of these materials have had remarkable implications for our notion of landholding in Late Antiquity. Thus, where to the landholdings that we see in the Ravenna Papyri fit in? And, perhaps, can we speak of similar landholding systems?

It is fairly difficult to draw a line when these kinds of comparisons have to be made. For instance: Which century entails too much different economic patterns that a comparison might not be fruitful, or when will it? Or: Which piece or pieces of property lie too far out of the

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<sup>78</sup> For example, in *P. Ital. 10-11* we see several *fundi* adjoining the *massa* Pyramitana. Other similar cases can be found in *P. Ital. 20, 30, 35, 36* and *37*; in all the other cases we do not see fields joining, or there is just no evidence for this.

<sup>79</sup> See chapter 3, section 3 'Donations: To the Church, from the Church'.

<sup>80</sup> Kehoe (2007) 32, 35, 36, 70, 98.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*, 75, 90.

<sup>82</sup> There is no evidence for the duration of contracts in the Ravenna Papyri, but the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* notes that most of the tenant contracts were long term. See: *CJC* xi.48.19; *CJC*, ii, 441.

conceptual and organizational zone that some of these late antique landholdings illustrate? Throughout most of the scholarly works, however, a particular focus has been set: From the third century towards, roughly speaking, the seventh century AD; more or less along the lines of what we now call Late Antiquity.<sup>83</sup> This particular focus is completely logical and to be expected. All of the evidence before the third (one can make a case for the fourth) century is completely different from what we see later in many ways, with an emphasis on amount, complexity and intricacy.<sup>84</sup>

On the other side of the spectrum we have sources coming from the ninth, tenth and somewhat later centuries. Here, again, the evidence is scattered, lacks interpretation, and from what we possess it is difficult to make any useful comparison. Wickham and Banaji, both of whom were able to make far-reaching and influential conclusions regarding the state of these later centuries, admit that these are filled with difficulties and should be studied on their own.<sup>85</sup> And here the difficulties do not stop. The variables of what we have acquired so far are, unfortunately, frustratingly difficult to use in comparisons. We do not possess actual complete sizes, and surely do not possess the knowledge to calculate total incomes.

Our best bet, then, is to find landholding systems that look somewhat similar, which have a similar form of fragmentation, more or less the same structure and, hopefully, likewise actors. And, certainly, it might be best to use the timespan that the Ravenna Papyri incorporate: From the fifth- until the eight-century.

One of the first landholding systems that should be considered for a comparison is that of the Apion estates. The evidence for this system originates from sixth-century Egypt, the region of Oxyrhynchus to be particular. Of the various types of documents that have been produced by these estates, the most informative are the so-called estate accounts, or, as the documents describe themselves: ‘Accounts of receipts, and pieces of expenditure.’<sup>86</sup> Some of these documents survive in a relatively undamaged conditions, though there is a much larger number of small fragments of these accounts, most of them focusing on the collection or expenditure of some products, such as wine.<sup>87</sup> It is from the first body of the documents, which is a set of accounts in rather good condition, that we can infer a good sense of the overall structure of these estates.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> For an analysis on the term ‘Late Antiquity’, see Carrié (2017) 197; also Banaji (2001) 16.

<sup>84</sup> Banaji (2012) 598-599.

<sup>85</sup> Wickham (1981) 44; Banaji (2001) 257-269, esp. 258-259.

<sup>86</sup> *P. Oxy XIX 2243(a)*, lines 87-88.

<sup>87</sup> *P. Oxy XVI 1911* (complete account); *P. Oxy XXVII 2480* (wine account).

<sup>88</sup> *P. Oxy XVI 1911, LV 3804, XIX 2243(a), XVIII 2195*.

The documents confirm a strikingly uniform pattern, even for papyri with such a large chronological span. Each of the papyri represents a set of annual accounts, primarily for agricultural properties, drafted by a wide array of individuals bearing the title overseer (or *pronoetes*). In three out of four cases, the accounts seem to be settled around *epoikia*, probably some form of settlement. Each set of account covers six or seven of such settlements. The first half of each set of the accounts lists how much has been produced by each of these localities, thereafter the payments are recorded from specific groups and individuals, most of them groups from the settlements that have been named in the beginning of the document. At the end of the document, one finds large sums added together, representing the sum total of receipts from every settlement.<sup>89</sup> In *P. Oxy. 3804* we see the most extensive set of these accounts, which concerns seven *epoikia*.<sup>90</sup> This account details every sum contributed by each individual, and from some groups, with most of these figures often described in relation to their parentage, or place of origin.<sup>91</sup> In most cases, the individuals are described as *apo tou autou ktemtos*, which means ‘coming from the same landholding’, indicating that each *epoikion* was associated with a particular *ktema* or division of land.<sup>92</sup> In Egypt there is similar evidence for these kinds of systems in the vicinity of Oxyrhynchus, but also in the Arsinoite.<sup>93</sup>

Such a system has some similarities to what we see in the Ravenna Papyri. Namely, the use of *epoikia* and *ktema* might remind us of the structure of *fundi* and *massae* that we see in most of our papyri. And, accounts that list overseers, tied tenants, and sometimes slaves, together with rows of collected rent and places of origin, can also be seen in *P. Ital. 2* and *3*. Here, however, the similarities stop. The Apion estates were not as nearly as fragmented as the landholdings in the Ravenna Papyri.<sup>94</sup> And, certainly, the landowning elite in each of these Egyptian systems would appear to have been far more reliant on the leasing out of land than their Ravennate counterparts: That is to say, members of this primarily Egyptian landowning elite were primarily rentiers.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, most of these estates were worked by a servile workforce, or tenants, typically described as *georgoi* who, in addition to labor also provided rents in coin, kind or both with respect to the amenities and lands associated with each settlement. In the Ravenna Papyri we see, however, much more free proprietors, some of which

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<sup>89</sup> See *P. Oxy LV 3804* (lines 141-142 for a total sum).

<sup>90</sup> *P. Oxy LV 3804, 1-140*.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem*, column II, lines 15-39.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, lines 15-39.

<sup>93</sup> For another likewise system in the vicinity of Oxyrhynchus, see the property of Ieremias: *P. Oxy XIX*; for the Arsinoite, see *P. Iand.inv.653*, and T. Reekmans (1962) 14-16.

<sup>94</sup> Wickham (2005) 77; Banaji (2015) 72; Banaji (2012) 605; D. Rathbone (1991)

<sup>95</sup> Rathbone (1991) 182-183; Rowlandson (1996) 284; Banaji (1992) 134-163.

carry out secondary professions as well, and who were not systematically ‘controlled’ by wealthier aristocrats.<sup>96</sup>

For the west the evidence seems very blurry. For the fifth century, the Latin Vita of St. Melania the Younger records that she owned sixty settlements called *villulae*, apparently inhabited by *servi* agricultures.<sup>97</sup> Of course, the estate accounts in *P. Ital. 3* come to mind. Yet, whether these *servi* really were slaves, or something approximating more to the *coloni* that we see in *P. Ital. 3* is unclear. The same applies to the bipartite estates that we find in the letters of Pope Gregory the Great, but because of the fact that these estates were situated on Sicily, as is the case with *P. Ital. 3*, we could conclude that we are dealing with *coloni*.<sup>98</sup> But, again, here the existence of small- or middle-large free proprietors remains ambiguous.

No evidence equivalent to that of the Ravenna Papyri seems to survive for late Roman Gaul. Significant details do emerge from the writings of Salvian of Marseilles, who, in Book V of his *De Gubernatione Dei*, gives a vivid portrayal of agrarian conditions in the late empire. Salvian describes peasants handing over their plots of land to a great landowner in return for protection by that same landowner; eventually becoming his tied *coloni*.<sup>99</sup> We also possess the will of king Lothar, and documents coming from bishop Remigius; but although both documents give evidence for bipartite estates similarly to what we find in *P. Ital. 3*, there is, again, no evidence for small- or middle-large proprietors, and any form of fragmentation seems to have been completely absent.<sup>100</sup>

The only landowning systems that might be somewhat equivalent to what we see in the Ravenna Papyri can be found later, in the eight-century. In the first area, in and around Lucca, we find one rich cathedral church, over fifty smaller churches, and a large number of urban landowners who all possess disparate pieces of property. Even though the overall scale of this landowning was not large by modern standards, it was all-pervasive, as the three-hundred or so Lucchese documents for the century show us.<sup>101</sup> Another interesting feature of Lucchese landowning, small- as well as large-scale, including that of tied-peasants or tenants, is that it was extremely fragmented. We possess a charter from 762 AD in which a bishop called Peredeus, apparently from one of the major landowning families in Lucca, divided some lands with his close nephew Sunderad. First, they split a small demesne, consisting of several pieces.

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<sup>96</sup> See also Chapter 2.

<sup>97</sup> G. E. M. De Ste Croix (1983) 252.

<sup>98</sup> Greg. *Epp.* ix. 108.

<sup>99</sup> Salv., *De Guber. Dei*, V, 38-39, 42-43, 45.

<sup>100</sup> For will of Lothar, see: J. M. Pardessus (1843) 230, I. N. Wood (1994) 207-210; for Remigius, see: *Testamentum S. Remigii*, 57-63; C. Grey (2012) 633.

<sup>101</sup> For eight century Lucchese documents, see: *CDL*, I-II (to 774).



Not shortly after, they divide the pieces in twenty individual fields, and two large apple orchards. But most importantly, these Lucchese documents describe the landholdings in terms of estates and fields, showing isolated plots of land scattered across the countryside. One particular difference with the Ravenna Papyri, however, is that these documents do not record large-scale blocks of land owned by one single person at all, and it is likely, taking into account later evidence from the same area, that they were rare.<sup>102</sup>

Although different political actors inhabited the Rhineland in comparison to Italy, the landowning structure seems to have been just as fragmented as in Lucca and the Ravenna Papyri. There were only a few single-block estates, and most land was owned in scattered parcels, even by aristocrats who seem to have accumulated their plots of land in many cases quite slow, and field by field. In documents coming from our best-documented villages (Dienheim, Bensheim, Bürstadt, Oppenheim and Menzingen) we see complex networks of landowners, not separated by status, but all intermingled: There were really large landowners, like the king, and some substantial local aristocrats.<sup>103</sup> Aside them we see village-based medium owners and (very) small peasant owners, just as in the Ravenna Papyri; these turn up in the documents as witnesses, donors to the Church, or as people fighting for their livelihood in court. However, free tenants that owned land as sole owner seem to have been less common, in that most of the farmers referred to in our charters are ‘unfree’ *servi* and *mancipia*; this seems to be fairly typical of Frankish estates, as later ninth-century documents make plain.<sup>104</sup> A good percentage of these isolated fields, such as vineyards, were given to farmers by the Church, either to the families of their donors or to the free peasants whose lands often adjoined them.<sup>105</sup>

Thus, Late Antiquity knew multiple landholding systems, some of which look familiar to what we see in the Ravenna Papyri. But, we should remember that each of these landholdings were constructed in unity with their contemporaneous place in space and time. The idea of a system characterized by disparate landholdings, large or small, is a mere abstraction unless each context is constructed in its own term or terms. The way in which society handled these differences and how they were recorded have major complications for how we perceive them.

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<sup>102</sup> *CDL*, II, 161 (154 also divides landholdings). For tenurial fragmentation in Lucca, see e.g. A. Mailloux (1994) 208-222.

<sup>103</sup> The basic accounts of the middle Rhine are M. Gockel (1970); F. Staab (1975); M. Innes (2000); for Dienheim, see Gockel (1970) 184-203, 222-227; Staab (1975) 262-278; E. Freise (1978) 1187-1198; Wickham (1995) 519-523; Innes (2000) 22-23, 108-109, 126-128; for Bürstadt, see Gockel (1970) 228-312; for Menzingen, see F. Schwind (1977) 457-464; this whole article is the best overview of 8<sup>th</sup> century villages in the German lands, and it emphasizes the fragmented nature of landholding; for aristocrats, see Innes (2000) 51-77.

<sup>104</sup> Etienne Renard shows that the term *mancipium* could mean any dependent tenant, free or unfree, in several ninth-century west Frankish *polyptychs*. See: E. Renard (2000) 179-209.

<sup>105</sup> Gockel (1970) 184-203; Innes (2000) 25-27.

Thus, there is no unified bloc of landholdings in place and time, that is to say that they were not exactly the same; likewise, there was not a homogeneous class of landowners, and so on. We should treat each of the given examples, still, in their own right.

### 1.5 Conclusion

We have, then, looked into the accounts as a bookkeeper to make a coherent report. Although it has been a suggestive account, much has become clear. Namely:

(1.) There are several types of landholdings attested in the papyri, with the main types being tenant farms in name of a lord, or lords, with leases, and self-employed farmers. In terms of bookkeeping, these properties could be a *fundus*, and the latter could be part of a *massa*.

(2.) The size of each landholding remains ambiguous, but we can be certain that these papyri list several very large landholdings, which are situated around Rome, on Sicily, and on Melita in the Adriatic Sea, and middle- to small-holdings, which can be found near Ravenna, Rome, Rimini, Padua, Bologna and Lucca. These larger pieces consist of continuous blocs, some of them closely situated near each other, but sometimes also not. The smaller pieces that we see in the north, however, were almost always disparate.

(3.) That what is being transferred in the north and central parts of Italy is, when it comes to size, around 20 *iugera*, with a large market in much smaller pieces which vary in size. On Sicily and Melitta the attested sizes are around the 100 *iugera* mark, sporadically around 150 *iugera*.

(4.) There are enough indications that there must have been an active land-market in these smaller pieces, where very small parts were transacted between each and every proprietor. Larger pieces were, perhaps, not transferred as much.

In any case, Wickham's (and to some extent Delogu's) suggestion that the landscapes of the Italian west were invariably dominated by estates and that villages were '...secondary to estate organization, where they existed at all' overstates it.<sup>106</sup> The Ravenna Papyri, at least, show otherwise, namely a major group of smallholders that, in some certain areas, was gaining ground. Unless a possible 'expansion of estates' led to a complete widespread reduction of these forms of landholding, and settlement, it seems more credible to assume that a substantial part of the landed property continued to inhabit agglomerations of this kind. This is not to say that dispersion was more characteristic of the western countryside than the East, but the Ravenna Papyri surely show that we should look at the issue of landholding systems with all the available sources in mind and not just what archaeology can (and cannot) tell us.

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<sup>106</sup> Wickham (2005) 514.

# 2

## Social aspects of the Ravenna Papyri:

### The social structure of the *P. Ital.* landholdings

The goal of this chapter is to distill important characteristics of those who operated in the land market that we can see in the Ravenna Papyri. In particular, this chapter aims to show that each of the ‘classes’ that we see in these papyri has a distinct set of features that deserve special attention. The crucial caveat in Late Antiquity that, apart from some groups, there was no notion of a distinct set of classes, should not preclude us from theorizing and placing the people that can be associated with these late antique landholdings in a clearer framework.<sup>107</sup>

But why is it necessary to look at the ‘landholding participants’ in the Ravenna Papyri? First of all, knowledge about the participants shows if there is, perhaps, a clear profile of owners. For example: From the first chapter one could conclude that there were in any case just two groups of landowners, namely those who inherited and prospered from very large landholdings in the south and Sicily, and those who possessed large – though not as large as southern or Sicilian landowners – pieces of land in the northern and central parts of Italy. But, we do not really know what this group consists of when it comes to actual people. Questions regarding a social profile have yet to be asked: Who are these landowners, and who are the people who work on their lands? Where do they come from? Is there a clear elite? Secondly, a sociological description of these figures when we do suspect their presence behind the evidence, could mean a lot for our perception of the relationship between status, wealth and power that we might discover in these documents. Namely, the documents could show actual cases of relationships between owner and worker, lord and tenant. Thirdly, the Ravenna Papyri become - and this is perhaps not of a primary importance to some scholars - more ‘lively’ after such an investigation. Often, research stops after the acquisition of certain results, such as a general indication of wealth. Such plain and straightforward outcomes often make the studied evidence plain and ‘un-human’, as if there have been no human decisions or interactions behind certain

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<sup>107</sup> S. Ellis (2006) 413, 415.

occurrences. The Ravenna papyri are first and foremost a product of human activity, and the same goes for the landholdings that are named in it.

There is not one work of extraordinary value on this particular subject, but the tangential historiography is quite extensive. In the last decades there have been numerous enquiries that tried to structure and order the social landscape of Late Antiquity. Social systems of landholding however, have been studied less thoroughly, but that does not mean that the works that do exist are not influential.<sup>108</sup> The scope, however, has always been from the third to the seventh century; only in a few cases is the framework placed a bit later. And, most importantly, only a few of them have been very specific in that they were an actual ‘zoom-in’ of local relations, instead of an overarching set of rules, formulations and ideas.<sup>109</sup> To make it short: Research on social relations within landholding systems have often been focused on the macro, not the micro.

But what does it mean to be part of a ‘system of landowners’? What we are dealing with here, it must be realized, is a culturally determined phenomenon. Namely, being part of a group of landowners, or farmers, is not a simple matter of, for example, possessing knowledge of landownership; or Latin speaking; or living within certain boundaries. And it is very much a question of being treated as someone from the landowning class by those others. Now, the wealthiest members of the landowning elite will obviously have been able to stake the most powerful claim in this regard. What they have transmitted regarding a social landowning system, which represents, of course, the lion’s share of what we now have, will deserve our full attention. The minute we go beyond these more apparent individuals, however, the evidence becomes murkier. Figures that are only in a very indirect way connected to these landholdings may have been important at the time, but most of them are lost in the evidence, and it is but the question if they should (and could) be included in our analysis as well.

In the end, then, we are largely constrained by the situation that has almost always prevailed for late antique research. That is, we possess many discrete pieces of evidence that were created by many different late antique individuals, though preponderantly by a variety of members from the upper class, or by people who are in direct connection related to (part of) a landholding. We can do little more than to take the evidence that we possess and examine it with the sensitivity for the intricacies involved, and thereby hope to get away with the social profiles of those who worked on these landholdings or owned them. The picture that we will

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<sup>108</sup> P. Anderson (2013) 154-172; R. R. Ruether (2009) 25-41, esp. 35-38; Wickham (2005) 442-590, esp. 442-519; Banaji (2001) 39-88; F. R. Trombley (2004) 73-104; A. E. Jones (2009) 74-179, esp. 94-95, 116, 118, 127.

<sup>109</sup> P. Sarris (2004) 55-72; F. R. Trombley (2004) 73-104.

extract, whether we like it or not, will unavoidably be dominated by the upper crust of society. That notwithstanding, it is always essential to peer further down the social scale, and when possible, beyond the administrator's and lord's main concerns. From all of this, for better or for worse, we can then construct a profile of those who are connected to the landholdings in the *P. Ital.* collection.

In the first part, the idea is to determine the economic and social position of the peasant. Often, narratives concerning their livelihood have concentrated on their 'bad position.' Because this can only be said for evidence originating from before the fall of Rome (the second, third and fourth century), and much later (the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries, and so forth), it might be worthwhile to check if this was also the case in those centuries in-between. Secondly, in the second part, the aim is to define the social-economic position of the medium landowner. More often than not, medium landowners are forgotten in the grand scheme of land-structures, and there are enough indications, as we will see, that this group took part in a particular sphere of society. Third, we will look into the apparent domination of the military and bureaucratic landowning class, which seems to have influenced the agricultural market considerably. Fourth, we will debate about the lack of agricultural slavery in the Ravenna Papyri. In the same part some remarks will be given about the importance of *P. Ital.* 3, which might be key in understanding the transition from landholdings based on agricultural slavery to feudal peasant-based societies. In the fourth part we will try to discern the importance of non-Roman groups in the Ravenna Papyri. Because of the fact that the Ravenna Papyri come from a period wherein large groups of Goths and Lombards took part in Roman society, the obvious question would be how. Their participation in Roman society has often led to debate, while their place in the landowning system is often forgotten. In other words, the previous question required a little more attention.

This chapter uses a 'thin' view of social structure, involving only a few key variables (which will be shown shortly) and a few basic processes, although it will point towards some long-term relationships and structures quietly.<sup>110</sup> It has to be said that such an approach must be considered as a particular perspective or framework, rather than a theoretical paradigm, because it can be associated with general theoretic claims that go beyond specific substantive problems. Rather, it provides a set of basic examples and principles, that can be applied or tested to other cases. Most importantly, these principles direct our attention to the hierarchic processes through which specific macrostructures come to have relevance for the actual lives of individual

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<sup>110</sup> C. Crothers (1996) 28.

persons, and, in theory, the processes through which these persons come to alter social systems, such as the landholding system.

## **2.1 The peasant-proprietor**

What is a peasant? I had some trouble defining a ‘landowner’ at the beginning of this chapter, for one has to use a number of different criteria to do so, given that few ‘landowners’ of our period were separated off on any consistent grounds from the rest of society. For the peasantry it is a little easier, however, as one can regard the concept as a strictly economic one. Out of the characterizations of a peasant that exist, mine will be simple: The peasant is a settled cultivator, who cultivates for sustenance, who performs at least some agricultural work by himself, and who controls the amount of labor on the land to some regard. Peasants can either be landowners or tenants. They can be part-time – though not full time – artisans, or they could also have laborers working part of their land, as many cultivators do, especially prosperous ones.<sup>111</sup>

All the same, two specific problems exist in any use of these papyri to characterize these peasants. First, they above all concern land, and thus only give a picture of those types of social relationship that relate to land, as it is given, sold, or leased to others. It is completely true that agricultural land is of a crucial importance in any agrarian society, for it is a direct marker of wealth and status. Which means that social relations linked to land are likely to be representative of other relations as well. But, dealings which involve land are always among the most formal and solemn acts that peasants engage in, and analyses based on land transactions risk expressing a message too hieratic, barely nuanced, a picture of the extent of social structure. Second, in any study of peasant society, one always has to read any given set of papyri through an awareness that most ‘authors’ (those people who had them drawn up) were not peasants, and which of them actually were is not easy to tell at all – a peasant will not give five estates to a church, but an aristocrat can easily give a single field. Thus, the local reconstruction that follows from these papyri will as a result have to deal with peasant and their richer neighbors alike, at least initially, and a specifically peasant society will have to be located in the framework of evidence that often enough tells us more about aristocrats and churchmen.

There is not an extensive amount of information given about farmers in the Ravenna Papyri, although we do have a lot more than just desultory mentions (as is unfortunately the

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<sup>111</sup> For more general works on peasantry in Late Antiquity, definitions, and transitions, see: Banaji (2011) 109-144; A. Chavarria Arnau, J. Escalona, A. Reynolds (2011) 60-81; L. Dossey (2010) 62; Wickham (2005) 383-441. I am aware that there is much more, but these have often been the most cited ones, and all give a clear definition of ‘their’ peasantry.

case with slaves (See: 2.4 Shifts in the labor-service: Slaves and the importance of *P. Ital. 3*). In *P. Ital. 1* we have a considerable list of tenants with names that work on the *patrimonium* of a retired *maior cubiculi* called Lauricius; in *P. Ital. 2* we learn of Titianus, a leaseholder of a piece of church-land that is, indirectly, owned by Agnellus the bishop of Ravenna; in *P. Ital. 3* we possess another extensive list of farmers, and their superiors to an extent (referred to as *allectori*); *P. Ital. 6* gives us the Gothic farmer Manna, who requests the city council to draw up his testament; in *P. Ital. 8* we have the freedman Guderit who after having gained freedom in name of his former owner, the Goth Collictus, has started an agricultural endeavor without, so it seems, restrictive ties; in *P. Ital. 20* two Gothic women called Sisivera and Theudifera, the first a former slave and the second a former mistress of Sisivera, work on an unaccounted amount of land; in *P. Ital. 35* a man called Domninus bearing the title *vir honestus* and *agellario* sells two pieces of land to *vir clarissimus* Deusdedit, a more extensive landowner.<sup>112</sup> Sporadically peasants carry titles such as *possessor*, *colonus*, and *negotiator*, indicating their legal position.<sup>113</sup>

It becomes noticeably murkier when we look at some other papyri, namely *P. Ital. 43*, *44* and *49*, however; the reason being incomplete iterations of the author of the individual papyri, or because the material has been sincerely damaged. In *P. Ital. 43* a court battle is laid out with the Gothic spouses Waduulfus and Riccifrida compensated with a *fundus* by the ‘ship-magnate’ Leo.<sup>114</sup> It is fairly clear that these Goths worked on pieces of land of Leo, but not what they own aside from the pieces that they have been ‘ordered’ (the relationship between worker and owner is particularly vague) to work on. It is wholly plausible that the spouses owned some pieces of land, and not only worked on some in a tied sense. The case is, anyways, pretty debatable, and gives unfortunately no clear answer on the question where and how these people functioned in the social landowning system. *P. Ital. 44* and *49* are even more troublesome, as only the names are given and no secondary occupations, dignitary titles, or specific data on the pieces of land.

Partly as a result of the lack of evidence, interpretations on the social-economic position of the peasant proprietor have varied considerably. Charles Diehl and L. M. Hartmann envisaged a process involving the growth of large estates, the decrease of small properties and

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<sup>112</sup> For list of farmers in *P. Ital. 3* see Appendix 2.

<sup>113</sup> These were the most common titles to be worn by peasants. See: M. Maas (2000) 67; for *possessor*, see: *P. Ital. 30* (Latinus v. h. *possessor*); for *colonus*, see: *P. Ital. 3* (*medietate per Valerium colonum, Iustinum colonos, per Proiectum colonum*; there are much likewise mentions in the same papyri); for *negotiator*, see *P. Ital. 20* (Iannes, a Syrian that subscribes in Greek).

<sup>114</sup> Compensation by landed property in *P. Ital. 43*: ‘... et de una uncia suprascripti fundi, que pro certis laboribus expensisque propriis ei suprascripto conlata est ...’.

a disappearance of free peasants.<sup>115</sup> Neither scholar has fully developed the implication of this view, and as we have seen in chapter 1, the evidence in northern and central Italy suggests that small dispersed units remained the norm. Their conclusions were largely based on the very different patrimonies of the Roman Church in Sicily which are described in some detail in the letters of Gregory the Great. Even on these estates, however, the peasants enjoyed a relatively high status, paid their rent in cash, and were personally responsible for the payment of taxes to the state.<sup>116</sup>

A rather different approach has been taken by a Soviet scholar, Udaltsova. On the evidence of the Ravenna Papyri she postulated a trend in the sixth century from slave to free peasant labor. In her view the large demesnes worked by slaves were reduced as peasants were given their own land and a measure of independence. Such a hypothesis conforms to the Marxist notion of a transition from the slave mode of production to 'feudalism' in the sense of an exploitative relationship between landowners and a subordinate peasantry of serfs.<sup>117</sup> This interpretation presents problems however. Here the use of *colonus* to denote a peasant or 'serf' with a particular status overstrains a term whose usage is very vague. Its most important original connotation refers not to economic or social status as to fiscal obligations; the *colonus* was attached to the land by the state because he was a valuable tax-producing agent.<sup>118</sup> Udaltsova probably underestimated the proportion of free rent-paying peasants in the Late Roman period, and certainly underestimated the importance of slaves after the sixth century, as more evidence at the end of this chapter will show.<sup>119</sup>

A more complex model has been advanced by André Guillou. He argued for the emergence of a class of independent peasants composed of *coloni* granted ownership of the land which they cultivated on condition that they paid tax directly to the state and tentatively attributed to these peasants an obligation of military service. This development was seen as stemming from the acute manpower shortage of the sixth century which was only alleviated gradually by immigration of easterners and by the turning of soldiers to agricultural activities; the presence of these new elements, in their turn, led to a position in which many *coloni* were treated as free proprietors.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Extension of large estates argued by C. Diehl (1888) 124, 292-299; L., M. Hartmann (1900) 135-136; idem (1908) 10-12.

<sup>116</sup> For example, see P. Jones (1969) 82.

<sup>117</sup> Z. V. Udaltsova (1961) 93-129.

<sup>118</sup> J. F. Haldon (1993) 121; C. R. Whittaker, P. Garnsey (1998) 282.

<sup>119</sup> References to *coloni* in the Ravenna Papyri are rare, apart from *P. Ital.* 3, which probably describes an exceptional arrangement. For more comments on this papyri, see '2.5 Shifts in the labor-service: Slaves and the importance of *P. Ital.* 3'.

<sup>120</sup> Guillou (1969) 197-202. More on manpower shortage, see: E. Stein (1949) 616.



I would side with the latter argumentation, that of Guillou, because of two plain reasons. First of all, the free farmers in the Ravenna Papyri, who were the recipients of the leases, were in any case certainly not *coloni* in the sense of tied serfs. We know from other sources that the contracts that were made up lasted a noticeable length of 29 years, though not 30 years; this to circumvent the legal provision that a peasant who cultivated property for 30 years automatically became tied to it. And, certainly, some of the proprietors in these papyri are most likely to have been proprietors in their own right; as is certain with *P. Ital. 6, 8, 20* – the rest (*P. Ital. 1, 2, 3, 43, 44, 49*) is debatable.<sup>121</sup> Fairly high status, or a ‘strong’ social position, is also suggested by the fact that in some cases the initiative for drafting the document was described as coming from the peasant; in *P. Ital. 1*, for example, the peasants Eleutherio and Zosimus seem to have had regular contact via papyri with their lord, Lauricius. It is wholly possible that the other peasants in *P. Ital. 1*, Sisinnius, Tranquillus, Gregorius, Cuprio, Eubudus, and Titianus, had a likewise relationship with Lauricius. The same applies to *P. Ital. 6* and *20*.<sup>122</sup>

Secondly, the economic position of the peasants also seems to have been relatively high. Whereas customary rents in Lombard Italy amounted to a third of the wheat and a half of the wine produced, the normal renderings under the exarchate were a tenth (sometimes a seventh) and a fourth (or a third) respectively.<sup>123</sup> Rents, or taxation pressure, under the Ostrogothic regime seem to have been even lower.<sup>124</sup> The reasons for this divergence are unclear. It is possible that a severe labor shortage or the well-attested readiness of oppressed peasants to flee to other parts may have forced lords to offer peasants improved conditions.<sup>125</sup> Another consideration is that lords in the exarchate had other ways of extracting surpluses from peasants, e.g. through taxation or other aspects of their political power.<sup>126</sup> Peasants in the area around Rome may have enjoyed a similar advantageous economic position, similarly those we see in the Ravenna Papyri, although the early papal leases are grants to well-to-do persons rather than to humble cultivators.<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, by the ninth and tenth centuries the term *colonus* had ceased to refer to personal status and denoted only economic obligations – attachment to a *casa*

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<sup>121</sup> The term *agellari* in *P. Ital. 35* also suggests a high social status. The latter term, or higher official terms, do not appear for these proprietors in *P. Ital. 1, 2, 3, 43, 44* and *49*. The given information is, unfortunately, just too meager.

<sup>122</sup> In *P. Ital. 6* the initiative from the will comes from Manna, a Gothic farmer; in *P. Ital. 20* the Gothic farmer Sisivera (a former slave) has the initiative of gifting a piece of property.

<sup>123</sup> Renders under the exarchate: V. Fumagalli (1969) 436-438; idem, (1971) 344.

<sup>124</sup> S. Bjornlie (2014) 138-170.

<sup>125</sup> Stein (1949) 616.

<sup>126</sup> Wickham (1981) 101.

<sup>127</sup> Hartmann (1904) 3-6, 14-15.

*colonaria* and payment of relatively high dues; this can only be the result of some kind of development that alleviated the peasants' social and economic position.<sup>128</sup>

The importance of the combination of a high social status and economic position can hardly be overstressed. Logically, the less land aristocracies possessed, the more was likely to be in the hands of peasants, and the more there was space for the autonomous actions of peasant proprietors. Such proprietors also did not have to surrender surplus to others in tax. As for dependent tenants, even though their autonomy and often their freedom was much more circumscribed, they too may have lived more easily than under the empire, for the signs are that the intensity of the exploitation of tenants, as told, declined considerably. So, dependents often paid less, and peasant owners paid little or nothing, by the seventh century, in notable contrast to the late Roman world; there were also more such owners; and the involution of the state created more space for a considerable, potential, peasant autonomy.<sup>129</sup> The balance of power had temporarily shifted, favoring peasants rather than lords. As a result, the economic parameters that we see in the Ravenna Papyri can sometimes be quite distinct from those of previous and successive periods.

It would be a misuse to call this a revolutionary shift. It was only partial, and it did not affect the fact that all peasants continued to operate inside circumscribed, subsistence economies; and it was a slow, imperceptible, development for most people.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, though the grantors of the leases in the Ravenna Papyri are unlikely to have exercised some kind of seigniorial jurisdiction over these tenants, or peasants, or whatever we want to call them, as there was no provision for this in Roman law, many lords must have wielded considerable *de facto* authority through their economic power and position and their simultaneous holding of public jurisdiction. Lords may have administered justice in practice because of a lack of public courts in remote areas and the impossibility of distinguishing between formal jurisdiction and a landowner's right to impose 'estate discipline'.<sup>131</sup> In any case, although the social and economic position of these peasants seem to have been high, we should do this with some nuance: Their political position was, as far as we can see, much worse.

Lastly, we should consider the effect of 'landholding-fragmentation' on the social position of peasants. As we have learned in chapter 1, there must have been a considerable number of fragmented landholdings, a patchwork of landed pieces if you will, certainly in the

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<sup>128</sup> Toubert (1973) 480.

<sup>129</sup> Pressure on peasant proprietors under the Late Roman state system: Kehoe (2007) 180, 190; P. Allen, N. Bronwen, W. Mayer (2009) 120-122; Banaji (2001) 4, 206, 210, 216.

<sup>130</sup> Wickham (1994) 33-34, 113-116, 212-225.

<sup>131</sup> Percival (1969) 469.

north around Ravenna, Rimini, Lucca, and Rome after some time. If one looks at this situation from the perspective of a village and its peasant inhabitants, it meant to them, first of all, that few if any single landowners were likely to own enough land locally to dominate a peasant community from the outside. Indeed, although it is likely that few villages around cities such as Ravenna had no land of urban owners in them, it was also the case that few villages had land of only one external owner in them. Rather, in most peasant communities there must have been a complex mixture of property-ownership, with external owners, prosperous medium owners, and owner-cultivators, intermingled in a stable pattern of fractural tenure which had probably changed little if anything since the fall of the Western Roman Empire.

## **2.2 Medium landowners: Civilians, merchants and artisans**

If a rich peasant, however, accumulated so much land that he/she did not have to farm any of it directly, by my definition such an individual would stop being a peasant, and become a ‘medium landowner’. Such medium owners characteristically, where they existed, stayed in villages or cities, and made up village or city elites along with their richer landowning neighbors. They generally behaved like other villagers, and intermarried with them, though medium owners in particular are in a structurally dominant position that could often last across generations; furthermore, given that there was seldom in our period a policed boundary between peasants and aristocrats, medium owners were at the bottom of a social ladder that could, for the ambitious and the lucky, lead up into the aristocracy. These features mark medium owners off from the peasantry as a whole, which is particularly important when we remember that our documentation, even when it tells us about landowning, tends to tell us about its richer rather than its ‘poorer’ members. The papyri from Ravenna portray a variety of middling to large landowners from various backgrounds: Artisans, private farmers, merchants, soldiers, Goths, Romans, bureaucrats, who buy, sell, donate and inherit landholdings are all attested. We will look at some of these groups more closely.

The first obvious group of medium landowners that comes forth from the Ravenna Papyri is that of artisans and merchants. In *P. Ital. 33* a Jewish merchant named Isacius decides to convert his assets in soap making (a profession in which he has proved to be successful), into several parts of the *Fundus Domitianus*. *P. Ital. 14-15* gives us the spouses Bonus and Martyria, manufacturers of tights, who try to invest their assets in landownership as well. This works, seemingly, as they have become able to invest in a couple of slaves.<sup>132</sup> In *P. Ital. 25* the

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<sup>132</sup> *P. Ital. 14-15*: ‘...exceptis mancipiis et septem semis unciis fundi Quadrantula.’

merchant Martinus, a Roman, invests in another piece of land; it is clear from the document that Martinus has done this before, though there is vagueness surrounding the specific properties of his investment. *P. Ital. 29* speaks of the Roman banker Basilius, who invests in a piece of property as well. Similarly, in *P. Ital. 38-41* the banker Theodorus invests in a complex of houses with gardens and alley's.<sup>133</sup> Lastly, in *P. Ital. 43*, we find out about Leo, the owner of a shipyard or several ships (the amount and scale is unfortunately not quite clear), who loses a dispute against the Gothic spouses Riccifrida and Waduulfus. Although it is not certain why Riccifrida and Waduulfus have the right to obtain this piece of land, the ship-owner Leo is portrayed as a wealthy individual (he seems to insist on paying the administrative costs of the dispute for the spouses) who might own more pieces of land than the average landowner.<sup>134</sup>

Some of them seem to have been particularly wealthy, such as the banker Theodorus, the banker Basilius, and Isacius the soap maker; but the majority of the group consists of fairly average individuals who have a very 'normal' income. Hence, the evidence points toward a trend of both rich and average merchants and artisans investing in land, probably with the intention of putting one's assets in a more long-term and 'stable' kind of resource. And, indeed, even greater economic status and social prominence could be gained by those men who were willing to invest in landed property.<sup>135</sup>

In the early sixth century these medium owners still played an important role in the administration of the cities, but they lost a great deal of political and economic ground in the period 550-800 AD. The Ravenna Papyri would make us believe that the number of merchants was stable: In the period between 550 AD and 604 AD one merchant is recorded, Iannes, and between 604 AD and 751 AD we find another one, Martinus.<sup>136</sup> But, economic decline clearly led to a reduction in the numbers and prosperity of merchants. If we also count other contemporaneous sources, five *negotiatores* are recorded in the second half of the sixth century, and only three certain examples survive from the period 604 AD till 751 AD.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> *P. Ital. 29*: 'A praesente Flavio Basilio viro honesto, argentario, spatium agri, cui vocabulum est Vetereca, situm territori Ravennati, placito et definito pretio auri solidios...'; *P. Ital. 38-41*: '...ter definitum est de quas autem sepedictas senas uncias principals domuc caenacolatae cum superioribus et inferioribus suis soloque proprio atque haera portici seu curtis sternate de latere et familiaricae caenacolatae cum solo proprio et usam potei et andronae, cum ingresso et egresso vel omnibus ad eisdem pertentibus his idem vendetor...'

<sup>134</sup> The 1 2/3 of the *fundus* Raunis is estimated to have a value of 130 *solidi*, which is a considerable amount. We can be sure that Leo owned more (the farmers Waduulfus and Riccifrida are most likely just two of the many tied farmers under him), which confirms that he was a very considerable landowner.

<sup>135</sup> Hall (2001) 63-76.

<sup>136</sup> Iannes: *P. Ital. 20*; Martinus: *P. Ital. 25*.

<sup>137</sup> Clear cases of *negotiatores* recorded between 550 AD and 604 AD: Albinus (Pelagius, *Ep.* 82); Basilius (*GR* ix.104); Iannes (*P. Ital. 20*); Liberatus (*GR* i.42); Petrus (Pelagius, *Ep.* 9); possibly also Abramius (*GR* x.21) and Petrus (*CIL* x.7330). Between 604-751 AD: Inga (*CIL* xi.6779); Martinus (*P. Ital. 25*); Anna widow of Anon (*CB* 29).

The drop in the numbers of those engaged in professional and artisanal activities such as banking, legal drafting, silk manufacture and medicine, is even more dramatic: The Ravenna Papyri records 18 cases between 552 AD till 604 AD, compared with a mere three in the following 150 years.<sup>138</sup> If we add what we know from other sources, the image becomes even more one sided: 45 persons are recorded in the period 552 AD till 604 AD, compared with a mere 6 between 605 AD and 751 AD.<sup>139</sup>

The fate of landowning bankers remains particularly ambiguous. In the Ravenna Papyri only two bankers are recorded in the period between 450 AD and 700 AD: The first a Flavius Basilius in *P. Ital.* 29, the second a Theodorus in *P. Ital.* 38-41. We do know that the position of bankers was important enough in the sixth century for one of their number, the famous Julian, to undertake the construction of the churches of S. Apollinare in Classe, S. Michele and S. Vitale in Ravenna. But their absence in the Ravenna Papyri, and other sources, confirms the complaint of Gregory the Great that there was only one banker left in Rome and its area.<sup>140</sup>

We can infer from other sources that some artisans were wealthy enough to provide a Church with expensive mosaics. However, similar to bankers, references to shippers, tailors and builders in Istria affluent enough to finance the floor mosaics of churches in the late sixth century are not matched in later sources.<sup>141</sup> Sixth-century evidence exists for the guild organization of various crafts such as baking in Ravenna, dyeing in Rome and soap manufacture

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<sup>138</sup> Between 550-604 AD: *Ammonius argentarius* (*P. Ital.* 4-5); *Andreas vir honestus* (*P. Ital.* 6); *Bonus braccarius* (*P. Ital.* 14-15); *Bonus tabellio* (*P. Ital.* 20); *Deusdedit forensis* (*P. Ital.* 4-5); *Georgius argentarius* (*P. Ital.* 4-5); *Georgius olosircoprata* (*P. Ital.* 4-5); *Johannes tabellio* (*P. Ital.* 8); *Iulianus adiutor forensis* (*P. Ital.* 6); *Laurentius gunnarius* (*P. Ital.* 4-5); *Liberius tabellio* (*P. Ital.* 14-15); *Marinus chrysokalaktis* (*P. Ital.* 16); *Petrus collectarius* (*P. Ital.* 6); *Quiriacus horrearius* (*P. Ital.* 6); *Theodorus olosircoprata* (*P. Ital.* 4-5); *Theodorus argentarius* (*P. Ital.* 27); *Vitalis argentarius* (*P. Ital.* 4-5); *Vitalis tabellio* (*P. Ital.* 16); between 605-751 AD: *Deusdedit tabellio* (*P. Ital.* 28); *Theodorus tabellio* (*P. Ital.* 27).

<sup>139</sup> Artisans and professional people recorded between 550 and 604 AD: *Amantius aurifex* (*CIL* vi.37782); *Ammonius argentarius* (*P. Ital.* 4-5); *Anastasius medicus* (*Gr* v.4); *Andreas vir honestus* (*P. Ital.* 6); *Archaleus medicus* (*GR* ix.32); *Bonus braccarius* (*P. Ital.* 14-15); *Bonus tabellio* (*P. Ital.* 20); *Deusdedit forensis* (*P. Ital.* 4-5); *Deusdedit notarius rogatariusque* (*MGH*, Epp. II, 438); *Eugenius notarius* (*CIL* vi.8401); *Florentinus extraepositus pistorum* (*P. Dip.* 121); *Georgius argentarius* (*P. Ital.* 4-5); *Georgius olosircoprata* (*P. Ital.* 4-5); *Honoratus tabellio* (*P. Dip.* 122); *Iohannes tabellio* (*P. Ital.* 8); *Iohannes agrimensor* (*GR* vii.36); *Iohannes argentarius* (*GR* xi.16); *Iulianus adiutor forensis* (*P. Ital.* 6, but also in *P. Dip.* 121); *Iulianus arcarus* (*CIL* 33715); *Iulianus argentarius* (*CIL* vi.9163); *Laurentius gunnarius* (*P. Ital.* 4-5); *Laurentius monetarius* (*P. Dip.* 120); *Leontius medicus* (*P. Dip.* 120); *Liberius tabellio* (*P. Ital.* 14-15); *Marinus chrysokalaktis* (*P. Ital.* 16); *Maximus nauclerus* (*CIL* v.1598); *Petrus argentarius* (*CIL* xi.350); *Petrus collectarius* (*P. Ital.* 6); *Petrus notarius* (*CIL* v.1602); *Quiriacus horrearius* (*P. Ital.* 6); *Stefanus nauclerus* (*CIL* v.1606); *Theodolus olosircoprata* (*P. Ital.* 4-5B); *Theodorus argentarius* (*P. Ital.* 27); *Vitalis argentarius* (*P. Ital.* 4-5); *Vitalis cerearius* (*P. Dip.* 120); *Vitalis tabellio* (*P. Ital.* 16); *Wiliaric bokareis* (bookdealer?) (*P. Dip.* 119). Between 605- and 751 AD: *Deusdedit tabellio* (*P. Ital.* 28); *Heraclius propositus coquinae* (*LC* 352); *Iohannes medicus* (*LP* i, 317); *Theodorus tabellio* (*P. Ital.* 17).

<sup>140</sup> Julian's activities: F. Deichmann (1951) 5-26; for the remark of Gregory the Great, see: *GR* xi. 16, which refers to one *Iohannes argentarius*.

<sup>141</sup> Shippers, tailors and builders in Istria in the sixth century: *Stefanus nauclerus* (*CIL* v. 1606); *Maximus nauclerus* (*CIL* v.1598); *Petrus notarius* (*CIL* v.1602).

in Naples; but although references to guilds occur again in the tenth century, there is no specific evidence in the collection of *P. Ital.* documents for their survival in the intervening period.<sup>142</sup>

In the Ravenna Papyri a tendency on the part of these *honesti*, a rank the medium owners naturally wore, to sell their property to officials and soldiers can be deduced in the late sixth century.<sup>143</sup> To some extent this eclipse can be attributed to the paucity of the evidence in which this information might be expected to occur, such as legal documents and inscriptions, but a major factor was undoubtedly the social and political predominance of the military – to which we will come shortly. Only in the late eighth century can we perceive an economic upswing that might have led to a recovery in landowning artisans and merchants: Agnellus records a successful deal in Constantinople carried off by a Ravenna merchant, who had the necessary characteristics of a landowning individual, namely the social and economic position.<sup>144</sup> By the ninth century, it seems that these medium owners in both Rome and Ravenna, who had previously possessed the rank of *honesti*, were able to secure higher dignitaries such as consul; which was hitherto monopolized by the military elite.<sup>145</sup> The idea that these ‘medium’ or ‘civilian landowners’ remained a fairly important economic, but not political, element runs counter to the views advanced by Charles Diehl and supported by Georg Ostrogorsky that “...l’exercitus représente la classe moyenne des petits propriétaires.”<sup>146</sup> Diehl’s view was based partly on an erroneous equation of *milites* and *possessores* in two texts which are not easily comparable, and partly on a supposed survival of the Roman institution of *praebitio tironum* which is both unattested and unlikely.<sup>147</sup>

What has to be clear, however, is that a distinct stratum of civilian landowners survived throughout this period in spite of political upheavals, economic regression and the rising power of military officials. Surely, the group of landowners that put their effort solely in maintaining their lands may have stood in a stronger position in the depressed conditions of the period than other others who drew their income also from crafts and trade.<sup>148</sup> Whatever the case, because those landowners categorized in the sixth century as *possessores* were never a clear and consistent cohesive group with uniform values, like the senatorial aristocracy, most individuals

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<sup>142</sup> Evidence for guilds can be found in: *P. Dip.* 121, *GD* iv.56; *GR* ix.113. On the survival of guilds also see Hartmann (1904) 16-21.

<sup>143</sup> *P. Ital.* 9, 13, 16, 17, 22, 37.

<sup>144</sup> Agnellus, *LP*, 30; the economic upswing is also portrayed by R. Lopez (1952) 274-278; and G. Luzzatto (1961) 47-53.

<sup>145</sup> For instance: Iohannes *consul et tabellio*, in *RS*, no. 60; Sergius *consul et tabellio*, in A. Bartoli (1963) 74.

<sup>146</sup> Diehl (1888) 314.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibidem*, 312; G. Ostrogorsky (1960) 102-103.

<sup>148</sup> In the Ravenna Papyri there is no evidence of landholders without second occupations. They appear in other sources, however. See: Genesia *honesti*: *LC* i, 353; Barbarus and Florentinus *honesti* bought a *casale* from Leopardus *honestus*: B. Capasso (1881) 256.

among them had a better chance of surviving into later centuries.<sup>149</sup> A tabulation of references to these kind of landowners confirms the group's continued significance: In the Ravenna Papyri the proportion of participants who can be classed as civilian landowners is at least around 25%.<sup>150</sup> Another source, the *Codex traditionum Ecclesiae Ravennatis* confirms this view: Of the grants of land made by the Church of Ravenna between 692 and 769 three out of the eleven recipients were civilian (27, 3 %).<sup>151</sup> Presumably there must have been more.<sup>152</sup>

### 2.3 Large landowners: Military commanders and bureaucratic officials

Most land, however, came to be concentrated in the hands of either the church, bureaucratic officials or military commanders. In the third chapter we will look more closely into the transference of property into the hands of the Church, but for now we will exclusively focus on military and bureaucratic officials. The Ravenna Papyri list an extensive amount of these individuals: In *P. Ital. 3* a bailiff called Maximus owns a very large piece of land, named Saltus Erudianus, on which he oversees no less than eleven tenants and three *allectori* (personnel that collected the rent of each individual landholding); in *P. Ital. 10-11* Pierius, a count in name of the Gothic king Odoacer, receives a couple of extensive plots of land (these are also mentioned in Chapter 1); in *P. Ital. 16* Johannes, a 'weapons carrier' of a (war)lord called Georgius (*spatario quondam Georgii magistro militum*) and leader of the Theodosian Numerus (*primicerii numeri felicium Theodosiacus*) donates some considerable pieces of land to the Church of Ravenna; in *P. Ital. 17* the father of the known Flavia Xantippe is recorded, one Megistus, who presumably owns even more land than his daughter and is at the same time a secretary of the emperor (*Megisti imperialis a secretis*); in *P. Ital. 21* a sub-deacon called Deusdedit had inherited extensive lands with slaves on them from his father, who was a *magister militum*; in *P. Ital. 22* Paulacis, soldier of the Numerus of Rimini (*Paulacine viro devote, milite numeri Arminiorum*), and son of Stefanus commander of the Veronese Numerus (*Stefani primicerii numeri Veronensium*), gifts to the Church of Ravenna an extensive piece of land; in *P. Ital. 23* Johannes, commander of the Numerus of Ravenna (*Prim. Num. Rav.*) gifts together with his wife Stefania a piece of property to a monastery; in *P. Ital. 31* a Montanus,

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<sup>149</sup> On problems of civilian landowners, see: T. S. Brown (1984) 6, 15.

<sup>150</sup> From the Ravenna Papyri we have 59 papyri, of which *P. Ital. 14-15AB, 25, 29, 33, 38-41, 43* certainly have landowners, and in *P. Ital. 4-5* (4 people as seen in note on earlier page), *6, 16, 27* there is a good chance that a civilian owned land; this gives roughly 25 percent.

<sup>151</sup> The *CB* shows three recipients that did not hold an office, solely land, and must therefore have been 'simple' civilians; *CB, 55, 80, 82.*

<sup>152</sup> There are enough examples from outside the Ravenna Papyri and *CB*. For instance: Genesia honesta (*LC i, 353*); Barbarus and Florentinus *honesti* bought a *casale* from Leopardus *honestus*, in B. Capasso (1881) 256.

notary of the royal cloakroom (*notary sacri vestearii domini nostri*) connects two pieces of separate *fundi* with each other, which he buys from a man called Domnicus; in *P. Ital. 32* a bureaucratic official named Laurentius buys a considerable piece of land from two individuals, names Milanus and Gerontius; in *P. Ital. 35* Deusdedit, a functionary at the court of the Holy Donation Fund (*Palatino Sacrarum argitiorum*) buys two large pieces of property from the farmer Domninus; in *P. Ital. 36* the same Deusdedit resells a piece of property to Hildigernus the Goth, who could be a military official; in *P. Ital. 37* a soldier of high rank called Iohannis buys a piece of property that belongs to the same *fundi* as that of the latter Deusdedit (*Genecianus*), from the Goth Rusticiana, and with permission of her husband Tzitta who is soldier at the Numerus of the *Persoarmiyorum* (that is Ravenna). Two other papyri (*P. Ital. 9, 13*) are, unfortunately, less extensive in form and particularly vague on the social profile of individuals named therein; though there is a good chance that they were in fact part of this class of military or bureaucratic landowners.<sup>153</sup>

Landholding by bureaucrats was not a novel phenomenon: In the sixth century civil governors were mainly appointed from the ranks of the large landowners.<sup>154</sup> The *Pragmatic Sanction* assumes that officials would be rich enough to make good injuries done to subjects out of their own wealth, and Pope Gregory's letters show that officials who were under investigation by commission of inquiry feared confiscation of their property or its takeover by rapacious neighbors.<sup>155</sup> The Pope ordered the bishop of Reggio Calabria and the administrator of the Campanian patrimony to protect the 'lands and dependents' of the former prefect Gregory, who is also recorded as holding extensive lands in Bruttium.<sup>156</sup> The men and estates of the former praetor Romanus in Bruttium, Campania, Apulia and Calabria, and near Syracuse were similarly placed under the protection of the Pope's agents.<sup>157</sup>

This 'military landholding class' seems new, however, and it begs the question how this group acquired such an amount of property. The most accepted explanation comes from Diehl and Hartmann and goes as follows: Garrisons that had protected Italian civilians during the sixth, seventh and eighth century had slowly merged with the local civilian inhabitants, who

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<sup>153</sup> For *P. Ital. 9*, Tjäder remarks that the papyrus was created shortly after the Gothic War, and that the recipient states that, as a result of this war, he lost slaves and several *fundi*. It indicates that the recipient itself was not there to protect it, but on campaign. See Tjäder (1955) 248; for *P. Ital. 13*: The papyri states: *tenendi, per huius meae paginam largitatis dominos et procuratores vos in re vestra instituens, et revocandi damus licentiam* which indicates that only those slaves which deserted the *fundi* during the Gothic War will be gifted. This means, again, that the owners themselves were on campaign, and were therefore most likely (Gothic) military officials.

<sup>154</sup> Banaji (2001) 129; L. Lavan (1999) 155; Lavan (2001) 44.

<sup>155</sup> *PS* c. 18; *CJC*, iii, 800; see also Jones (1964) 395; investigation by officials: *GR* ix.130

<sup>156</sup> Lands of Gregorius near Calabria: *GR* ix.61, 62, and ix.123.

<sup>157</sup> Lands of Romanus: *GR* ix.88



had inherited certain obligations of self-defense from the late Roman period, and thus each town became to be dominated by an all-embracing *exercitus* of garrison troops. Gradually this group of soldiers also coalesced with the class of local landowners or *possessores*. The state set the seal on this process by attaching an obligation of military service to the possession of land.<sup>158</sup> Other scholars have accepted this reconstruction and emphasized its common features with the widely-held view of the ‘theme-system’ as based on defense by landed soldiers.<sup>159</sup>

Nothing in the *P. Ital.* contracts suggests anything other than a simple economic transaction, apart from occasional grants made by the Church in order to obtain influence over powerful people. There is no evidence for compulsion applied by the state on the church to rent out land, or for any obligation of military service; interestingly enough, in *P. Ital. 16* the clause *fori loci militiaeque perscriptione* even denotes the donor’s renunciation of *praescriptio fori*, whereby he promises not to have resort to military jurisdiction in the event of any dispute.

In any case, many factors must have contributed to the concentration of property in the hands of bureaucratic and military officials. Both could marry local heiresses, and senior officers could exploit their political authority to obtain land by corruption, extortion and expropriation. Most land, however, appears to have been purchased (or perhaps rented) by soldiers and bureaucrats through legitimate transactions, a process understandable in the conditions of the period: The Church had to find tenants for the vast amounts of land which it had amassed over the last decades, and the only group with sufficient money was the army or officials of state.<sup>160</sup> The increasing insecurity, and falling prices may have forced many civilian landowners to sell their lands, often simply to pay their taxes; the only group to benefit from this were the soldiers, who received (fairly) regular pay and were exempted from poll-tax and who were thus able to purchase land in a buyer’s market.<sup>161</sup>

There is also one example of state intervention which may have encouraged the acquisition of landed property by soldiers, although it was perhaps not the intention of the authorities. This was the custom of *hospitalitas*, the compulsory billeting of garrison soldiers in private houses, which had long been a practice in the Roman Empire.<sup>162</sup> Evidence from Egypt suggests that troops billeted in a place for a long time could gain control of property either through intimidation or a direct take-over on the death of the owner.<sup>163</sup> Direct references to

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<sup>158</sup> Diehl (1888) 312, 317; Hartmann (1889) 58.

<sup>159</sup> L. Schmidt (1941) 586-588, F. Schneider (1924) 15-37.

<sup>160</sup> B. Ward-Perkins (2008) 337.

<sup>161</sup> Tax exemptions: W. Goffart (1974) 53-60; Jones (1964) 635; for falling prices see: L. Ruggini (1961) 5-6.

<sup>162</sup> Billeting and Ostrogothic *hospites*: Jones (1964) 248-253.

<sup>163</sup> R. Remondon (1961) 62-5.

billeting in fifth-century Italy are very rare, even though a letter from Gregory the Great expresses concern that soldiers had been given ‘special-quarters’ in a small nunnery in Naples, and one summary of the Justinianic Code contains a mysterious provision about *hospites* not being allocated.<sup>164</sup> On the other hand, the technical term for such quarters, *metata*, does occur on several documents.<sup>165</sup> It is arguable that financial pressure, or pressure from all kinds of other sources, may have led to an increasing resort to private buildings because of the expense of proper barracks; in any case, lodging difficulties may well have encouraged the authorities to allow soldiers to acquire their own property.

It is reasonable to suggest that individual *possessores* joined the ranks of the army. The group probably embraced civilian landowners of widely differing degrees of wealth and status.<sup>166</sup> Furthermore, we have seen that many, perhaps a majority, of civilian landowners were already in severe difficulties in the conditions of the late sixth century. It is possible to reconstruct the position which the survivors had in the early seventh century: They had lost a major source of political power and social prestige, and of course they must have noticed the opportunities of self-enrichment enjoyed by soldiers. Fiscal considerations were possibly another factor: Soldiers were exempt from the poll tax, and given the flexibility of some tax arrangements it is possible that land tax assessments were reduced when a *possessor* took on another public obligation such as that of military service. And, perhaps most important of all, with the decentralization of power in Italy in these centuries, it was natural for ambitious landowners to side with the institution which controlled the political system and has access to its rewards. But it is unhelpful to speak of a whole class ‘merging’ with the army: Specific cases of *possessores* joining the army are remarkably absent, and it is wholly possible that many of these landowners did in fact remain civilian<sup>167</sup>

#### **2.4 Shifts in the labor-service: Slaves and the importance of *P. Ital.* 3**

Thus far not much has been said on slavery. This has a reason: Even after some careful consideration of every sentence in these papyri, there are only few hints towards a landed economy based on slave labor. Only in some instances do we see them appear. Namely, very briefly in *P. Ital.* 4-5, 6, 8, 9, 13, 14-15, 17, and 21. *P. Ital.* 6 is perhaps the most intriguing case

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<sup>164</sup> For Gregory the Great see: *GR* ix.207; for Justinianic Code, see: *CJ* xii.41 and *SP* ii.7.20.

<sup>165</sup> For the use of *metata* (or *metatus*): *GR* iv.8, xi.53.

<sup>166</sup> During the six, seventh, and eight centuries there seems to have been a recurrent shortage of manpower. See: Ostrogorsky (1960) 100; Guillou even lists cases wherein individuals volunteered to be commander. See: Guillou (1980) 72-75.

<sup>167</sup> Diehl admits that references to *possessores* are rare in the 7th and 8th centuries, and that there is no direct evidence that *possessores* joined the army. See Diehl (1888) 311.

of a document mentioning slaves. The document gives some insight in the process of slaves becoming free citizens: Two Gothic farmers, Nanderit and Manna, note in their will that when they die three slaves, a family of which only the name of the husband is noted (Albanio), will receive their freedom and Roman citizenship.<sup>168</sup> The only papyri that gives us a really considerable amount of information, however, and not just a sole mention of these individuals, is *P. Ital. 13*.<sup>169</sup> At first sight, then, it seems as if slaves were not that important or just not regularly used; at least, if we are to believe the Ravenna Papyri. Is this a distorted view? Has the evidence, in any way possible, been accidentally altered? The question here is, naturally, how can we explain the considerable absence of slavery in the Ravenna Papyri?

Although there is little evidence from the other sources, such as Gregorius' letters, to suggest that slave labor was very dominant, lords appear to have maintained demesnes by means of direct slave labor; and on an extensive scale.<sup>170</sup> For example, in 599 AD imperial officers in Naples commissioned Jewish merchants to purchase slaves in Gaul, perhaps to alleviate manpower shortage in Italy, which has often been suggested to have taken place in the sixth, seventh, and eight centuries.<sup>171</sup> There has also been extensive works on the use of slave labor in Ostrogothic Italy (and Visigothic Spain), which concludes that in the accumulation of wealth there must have been a considerable contribution of slaves.<sup>172</sup>

The Roman churches, both Orthodox and Arian, must be considered as well, because they naturally owned extensive pieces of land that had to be cultivated. And here are, again, indications that slave labor was used regularly; so do the letters of Pope Pelagius I and Gregory the Great show. The latter pontiff was keen to stamp out the ownership of Christian slaves by Jews but did not necessarily object to their ownership by laymen in general. Clementina *patricia* in Naples, Romanus *spectabilis*, Venantius *patricius*, Libertinus the former *praetor* in Sicily and Gregory's own brother in Bruttium are all recorded as possessing slaves.<sup>173</sup> They were also owned by humbler folk, it seems, such as a blind man in Genoa, an *excubitor* in Bruttium and a *defensor* in Campania.<sup>174</sup> A flourishing market for slaves existed, and many slaves in

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<sup>168</sup> *P. Ital. 6*: '...Albanione cum uxore et filia ingenuos esse volo, civesque Romanos.'; slaves are also freed in *P. Ital. 4-5*: '...quos quasque liberos liberevae esse iussero, hii omnes liberi liberevae sint totae.'

<sup>169</sup> *P. Ital. 13*: '...cum mancipiis, quae in designatis massis esse noscentur, et, si qua tempore hoc barbarici ex eisdem lapse repperiri potuerint, tenendi...'; the list goes on about the 'properties' of the slaves.

<sup>170</sup> Gregory's toleration of slavery: J. Richards (1980) 58-9.

<sup>171</sup> Slaves 'ordered' by imperial officials: *GR ix.104*.

<sup>172</sup> Slaves in Ostrogothic Italy: H. Nehlsen (1972) 123-127; in Visigothic Spain: P. D. King (1972) 160-170. Also accepted by Guillou. See Guillou (1969) 196-197.

<sup>173</sup> Pelagius, *Ep.84*; *GR ii.15*, iii.35, iv.12, ix.30, 98, 144, 209; on ownership of slaves by Jews: *GR ii.6*, iii.37, viii.21, ix.104; ownership of slaves by laymen: Clementina (*GR iii.1*), Romanus (*GR ix.10*), Venantius (*GR ix.19*), Libertinus (*GR x.12*); Gregory's brother: Anon (*GR ix.200*).

<sup>174</sup> Humber folk: Philagrius of Genoa (*GR ix.235*); Comitoliolus *excubitor* (*GR ix.89*); Felix *defensor* (*GR iii.39*).

Campania fled to the Lombards.<sup>175</sup> In one intriguing case, parents are listed selling their children.<sup>176</sup> That the Church continued to own slaves in the following century is clear from *formulae* dealing with their donation, exchange and manumission.<sup>177</sup>

While some slaves were clearly used as laborers, others worked as rent-paying tenants, whose economic position may have differed little from that of free *coloni*.<sup>178</sup> However, an indication of their greater subordination to their masters' authority can be found in the use made of slaves by landowners in attacking official authority. In 592 the slaves of the patrician Clementina rose up in revolt against the administrator of the church of Naples.<sup>179</sup> In the later period of Byzantine rule the ruling elite of Istria owned slaves, and many of the followers of local warlords in the Roman Campagna such as Toto and Gratosus may have been slaves; though this is debatable.<sup>180</sup> In the late eight century Pope Hadrian I donated slaves to the churches of S. Adriano and SS. Cosma e Damiano when he converted them into charitable centers (*diaconiae*).<sup>181</sup> Thus, this much is certain: There is no shortage of evidence for slaves in the centuries after the fall of Rome.<sup>182</sup>

So, what are the reasons, then, that we are not seeing the latter in the Ravenna Papyri? First, it is not that strange that donations and transactions in the Ravenna Papyri exclude slaves: They were highly valued in these periods of manpower shortage. People were, perhaps, not willing to give them up in transactions, or they were too highly valued to work on land. Second, from statistical analyses it has been argued that slavery had already begun to die out in the area around Rome before the eight-century.<sup>183</sup> Third, we have to remember the difficulties surrounding slavery: Slaves are a considerable risk. The more numerous they are, the more expensive and dangerous they are to police. They need to be cared for, in high seasons and in low, when hired labor can be laid off, and tenants left to their own holdings. Normally, they surmise high levels of expedience, of the sale of agricultural products, for these risks to be covered. But, if there is that much exchange, then wage labor is equally feasible. As has been

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<sup>175</sup> Slave market (particular in Sardinia): *GR* ix.123; fugitive *nobilium servi* in Campania: *GR* x.5

<sup>176</sup> Cass. Var. 8.33: This letter has produced a rather large debate, with one side disputing the idea that these children were in fact slaves, and other side saying so. See: J. Boswell (1988) 201-202; V. Vuolanto (2003) 189, 198-199, 203-207; K. Harper (2011) 415-416.

<sup>177</sup> Church formulae involving slaves: *LD* 36, 37, 38, 39, 53, 71, 72, 74, 81.

<sup>178</sup> Pelagius I placed a high value on *mancipia* who could serve as *coloni*. See: Pelagius, *Ep.* 84.

<sup>179</sup> Clementina's retinue: *GR* iii.1; the dangers of such retinues of slaves were also recognized in legislation: *CJ* ix. 12. 10; *CJC* ii, 378.

<sup>180</sup> Istria: Guillou (1969) 305; Toto *caterva rusticorum* (*LP* i, 468); *fortiores* of Gratosus (*LP* i. 472).

<sup>181</sup> Hadrian's donation of *servi vel ancillae*: *LP* I, 510.

<sup>182</sup> For more evidence, see: H. Grieser (1997); P. Bonnassie (1991); Nehlsen (1972); Verlinden (1955-1977); and M. Bloch (1975) 161-170, who gives a great recap on evidence acquired before the second half of the twentieth century.

<sup>183</sup> Toubert (1973) 494-500.

argued in recent decades, the period wherein slaves are most likely to be attractive is when there is a stable market for agricultural produce, as well as an easily available slave market.<sup>184</sup> By and large, in the Later Roman Empire and later, if there was one there was not the other. Namely, the wars in the sixth century had produced enough slaves to be used, but this period was also linked to economic crisis. Similarly, the stable prosperity of the sixth century in the East had resulted in economic stability, but slaves were expensive because there were no new wars to ‘create’ them.<sup>185</sup>

The final alternative to large landowners at that moment of crisis, if they were not able to acquire slaves, was to hire labor forces. This we see in *P. Ital. 3*. This document has attracted much more discussion than any other of the documents from the Ravenna Papyri, and for a good reason. Scholars have argued that it is the key in understand the slaver-to-serfdom narrative and can also be associated with the manorial genealogy that some historians have seen as stretching from the Henchir Mettich inscription, to the polyptych of St-Germain.<sup>186</sup> Whatever the case, the papyri contain two large columns, which are situated near the sides of the document. One side lists the dues owed by a set of tenants, though not their names or holdings are written down, whereas the other side, which relates to the territory of Padua, lists all of the tenants’ names and the attached dues. Totals at the end of the document indicate that there might have been ten columns on the original document, but this is just suggestive. The dues are in money, or *xenia* (this seems to be the standard Latin term for gifts like chickens, eggs, ducks, milk, honey, lard and so on), and *operae*, which means labor, measured *per ebdomada*, varying between zero and three days per week.

Anyway, *P. Ital. 3* does list labor service and, unlike the other Ravenna Papyri, at quite high levels. It has been argued that the document is a one-off, unique in Italy until 730 AD. This is true, although not that surprising, since no rents paid by tenants are characterized in any detail in Italy from the fifth century until the 730’s. It is also true that it does not fit the total absence of such services in Gregory the Great’s letters, although this only shows that Sicily was different from the north of Italy.<sup>187</sup> The point is, however isolated and unusual *P. Ital. 3* is, there is not one document with different evidence about rents in fifth-, sixth- or seventh-century northern Italy, which would make it legitimate to set the text aside. The only strong argument

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<sup>184</sup> K. Hopkins (1978) 12, 99-111.

<sup>185</sup> Wickham (2005) 277.

<sup>186</sup> For commentaries on *P. Ital. 3*, see: Tjäder (1955) 185-186; the most extensive commentaries on the text are in Percival (1969) 607-615; Vera (1986) 425-430; the first stresses its importance, the second minimizes it; for more positive analyses: Jones (1969) 83-84; Percival (1969) 454-455, 460; more negative analyses: Toubert (1973) 466-467; A. Verhulst (1977) 92-93; see also the more neutral account in Jones (1964) 805-806.

<sup>187</sup> Toubert (1973) 466-467; A. Verhulst (1977) 92-93.

for its a-typicality is one made by Domenico Vera, who states that it is surprising to find so much emphasis on rent-money in the audit of an estate, and not, say, what the land produces in terms of wine, grain, or livestock.<sup>188</sup> In any case, the document cannot be argued away as a guide to one particular local reality. And, indeed, that local reality expected from some tenants to work a couple of days per week on the lord's land.

Most importantly, however, *P. Ital. 3* shows that there was another option for landlords to exploit their demesne. Rather than calling on non-peasants, who were always a minority in the late Roman countryside, at least one northern estate used tenants (*coloni*), who cultivated the *coloniae* as direct laborers. If a landlord wanted to manage part of an estate directly for profit, but had to play safe economically, then the use of tenant labor was arguably the safest solution. The practicability of profit from these landholdings is further underlined by the heavy accentuation on rent-money alongside labor. Perhaps, a-typical or not, even peasants could be expected to sell their produce here if they had 'extra'. This is the context of *P. Ital. 3* then: The possibility of the sale of agricultural goods, with an intensification of agriculture, but, most importantly, a desire or the necessity to do this without slaves, and by peasant-based labor service.

Wickham has used the evidence from *P. Ital. 3*, amongst materials of archaeological origin, to dispute that slavery did not die away slowly in the late antique world, but that systems of landownership changed almost abruptly from slave-based systems to peasant-feudal.<sup>189</sup> Arguing against it, Kyle Harper stated that this change must have been much more slowly: The transition must have been from an unusually complex society (that used slaves in 'abundance') to much simpler forms of social and economic organization wherein the (common) use of agricultural slaves disappeared.<sup>190</sup> I would side with Harper, for there is much more to say for his side of the argument. It cannot be a coincidence that at least some *servi* and *mancipia* in the eighth century, though they donned the original designation for slaves, were actually tenants.<sup>191</sup> It suggests that there was a slow transition from 'literally' using slaves to a mode of production wherein workers had to fulfill the slave's job, but legally were not one of them. It shows the use of a Roman past which had died away slowly, very slowly, but so completely that its basic terms could be used in a way that had nothing to do with the world of the Late Empire. *P. Ital.*

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<sup>188</sup> Vera (1986) 427; of course, this type of money rent may only be an accounting device, with peasants paying rent in produce, priced in money, but the detail of the other types of produce mentioned in the document argues completely against that. The only other references to rent in the Ravenna Papyri, for the period of 550-730 AD, and in northern Italy, are in *P. Ital. 44* and *45*; also one in the *Codice Bavaro* (CB 129).

<sup>189</sup> Wickham (2005) 286-293.

<sup>190</sup> K. Harper (2011) 497-510; also, J. Tainter (1990) 188.

<sup>191</sup> Renard (2000); W. Davies (1996) 225-246.

3 is not a piece of evidence to prove the quick transformation from a slave-based society to a feudal society; rather, it shows that in time of crisis large landowners had other options to choose from when they needed personnel to work their lands.

## **2.5 Non-Roman Elements: Goths, Easterners and the absence of Lombards.**

In the Ravenna Papyri Goths are not recorded as holding the highest offices, but they nevertheless seem to have maintained a prominent social position. A Goth named Wiliaric owned a bookselling business in 551 AD and may have been responsible for the production of the famous Gothic gospel-book known as the *Codex Argenteus*.<sup>192</sup> The properties near Urbino and Lucca which the Gothic lady Ranilo donated to the Church of Ravenna in 553 AD produced an annual income of 100 solidi.<sup>193</sup> A Goth named Manna who was either a soldier or a minor court official made his will in 575 AD and employed both Goths and Romans as witnesses.<sup>194</sup> A Goth named Gunderit was a secretary in the curia of Ravenna in 572 AD responsible for drawing up the municipal record of a will.<sup>195</sup> Other examples demonstrate how closely the Gothic minority was integrated into the Roman population. A distinguished Goth, Holdigern *clarissimus*, is recorded as buying land in the late sixth century from a Roman.<sup>196</sup> In proceedings held before the municipal council of Rieti in 557 AD concerning the ward-ship of two Gothic children the guardian appointed was a Roman *honestus* and mention was made of a powerful Goth named Gundirit who had brought an action against the boys' father.<sup>197</sup> Around 600 a Gothic freed woman named Sisivera made a donation of land to the Church of Ravenna which was witnessed by several Romans, including a bodyguard, the 'sub-officer' of a military unit and a Syrian merchant.<sup>198</sup> Other Gothic property-owners include a freed slave named Gudirit who died before 564 and Hildigernus who was, probably, a high military official.<sup>199</sup>

Caution is necessary in tracing Goths, however, since not all Goths held Gothic names. For example, from the Ravenna Papyri we possess one case wherein we can be certain that a

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<sup>192</sup> *P. Ital.* 34; Tjäder (1972) 144-164.

<sup>193</sup> *Ranilo sublimis femina: P. Ital.* 13.

<sup>194</sup> *Mannas: P. Ital.* 6

<sup>195</sup> *Gunderit exceptor, curialis civitatis Ravennae: P. Ital.* 14-15B

<sup>196</sup> *Holdigern: P. Dip.* 121; could be the Hildigernus from *P. Ital.* 36, but there is no direct evidence for this.

<sup>197</sup> Wardship of sons of Gudahals granted to Flavianus: *P. Ital.* 7. The piece shows that Adiud, Rosemud and Gundirit had brought actions against Gudahals.

<sup>198</sup> Sisivera's donation: *P. Ital.* 20. Witnesses include *Armatus scolaris*, *Adquisitus optio*, *Iannes Souros nagouzatro*.

<sup>199</sup> *Gudirit libertus: P. Ital.* 8; *Hildigernus: P. Ital.* 36; wealthy Goths are also recorded in evidence outside of the Ravenna Papyri. One Goth by the names of Guderit donates floor mosaics to the cathedral of Grado around 580 AD, and in 598 AD one Aligern defrauded a widow in Campania of her property. See: *Guderit: CIL* v.1588; *Aligern: GR* ix.36.

Goth acquired a Latin name: In *P. Ital. 13* Ademunt, the half-brother of the wealthy donor Ranilo, recorded in 553 AD, we also known as Andreas.<sup>200</sup> Because there is only one such case in the Ravenna Papyri, one would expect it to be an anomaly. From other papyrological corpora, however, we can deduce that this practice was quite common. For instance, in the *P. Dip* corpus we encounter numerous mentions of Goths who held non-Gothic names: The father of a gothic clerk of the Arian church named Minnulo possessed the Greek name of Christodorus; a lady who died in Modena in 570, Gundeberga *spectabilis*, had the alternative name of Nonnica; there is a strong case for seeing the head of a corporation of landowners recorded in 539 as a Goth – despite his name of Latinus (!); in a document from 551 two Gothic clerics, Wilienanc and Igila, are also referred to by the names Minnulus and Danihel.<sup>201</sup> Since the former individuals, Danihel and Minnulus, also appear in the same papyrus bearing only their Latin name, we would have had no means of identifying them as Goths.

Thus, a few landholders and farmers and also officials of Gothic origin may therefore lie concealed among the Roman names recorded in the Ravenna Papyri and elsewhere, but the fact is of little consequence since these ‘Goths’ may be assumed to have become wholly ‘Romanized’ in their culture. They would certainly have converted to Catholicism, a Romanizing trend which was under way even before the imperial conquest of Ravenna in 540 AD: In *P. Ital. 49*, we see a Gothic count named Gundila donating a piece of property to the Catholic Elias monastery in Nepi in 530 AD.<sup>202</sup> Whatever the case, the conclusions that can be drawn from this brief investigation is that Goths after 554 AD (the end of the Gothic War) who remained aware of their identity retained property and some social status but did not obtain the higher offices which had become the key to (considerable) power.<sup>203</sup>

Lombard names are absent from the Ravenna Papyri. This is strange, as there is enough evidence for their participation in the landholding system at the same time that some of the Ravenna Papyri were written: The Lombard name Anuald was held by a tribune who received land from the Roman Church between 715 AD and 731 AD and by a *chartularius* sent to Ravenna from Rome in 723 AD; Toto duke of Nepi, who imposed his brother Constantine as anti-pope in 767, possessed a Lombard name and some landed possessions, and although his

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<sup>200</sup> Ademunt *qui et Andreas appellatur: P. Ital. 13.*

<sup>201</sup> Minnulo, son of Christodorus: *P. Dip. 117*; Gundeberga *qui et Nonnica spectabilis: CIL xi.940*; Latinus *possessorum parens corporis: P. Dip. 114, P. Ital. 30*, Tjäder argues that this Latinus must be a Goth since he used the word *icc* (Gothic first-person singular pronoun ‘I’) in his subscription. See: Tjäder (1971) 14; Wilienanc and Igilia, alias Minnulus and Danihel: *P. Dip. 119.*

<sup>202</sup> For Gundila, see *P. Ital. 49*; also *P. Ital. 20* for a Gothic women donating to the Catholic Church; early Gothic donations to the Catholic Church can also be seen in other sources. For example, a Gothic lady named Hildevara made a donation to the Catholic Church of Ravenna in 524. See: Hildevara. *P. Dip. 85.*

<sup>203</sup> For high offices after 540 AD: J. P. Byrne (2004) 1080-1081; G. Tabacco (1989); V. Franchini (1908) 33-34.



brothers' names were Roman, the family may have been Lombard in origin; and two documents from the Farfa register dated 744 AD and 769 AD show a Lombard priest named Guntarius and his wife donating a piece of land to the monastery which was later leased back by their son Theodore, an officer of the *numerus* of Civitavecchia in Roman territory.<sup>204</sup>

It is of course possible that some of the Roman officials in the Ravenna Papyri 'secretly' wore Lombard names, or were of Lombard descent, since the Lombards commonly adopted Roman names even within their own kingdom: No less than 324 out of 1511 Lombards recorded in northern Italy bore Roman names, while in the duchy of Spoleto the figure was even higher (112 out of 411).<sup>205</sup> That we do not really see their identity is perhaps a testament to the rapidness with which the Lombard language disappeared and Roman practices were adopted in such fields as administration, military organization and urban living in the Lombard kingdom itself.<sup>206</sup> The prestige and authority of the empire and the lure of the titles and rewards which it offered were so great that it was difficult for barbarians to resist 'Romanization', unless they were in actual conflict with the empire or a distinct creed, such as paganism or Arianism, set them apart from the adherents of the official faith.<sup>207</sup>

We only see one Greek and a Jew owning land in the Ravenna Papyri, but that does not necessarily mean that there were only a few easterners that owned land.<sup>208</sup> A clear distinction has to be drawn between the south (including Sicily) and the rest of the peninsula, however. In the former area there is plentiful evidence for a large degree of Hellenization from the sixth century up till, at least, the tenth century.<sup>209</sup> Greek became the norm for documents, Greek remained a spoken language for a long time, and Greek usages predominated in the Church; it has been hotly debated if this southern Greek element represents a remnant from the pre-Roman *Magna Graecia* or is a reflection of Byzantine influence. The case for a pre-existing Greek stratum is strongest in Sicily, where a high proportion of early inscriptions are Greek and both the Greek literature and close ties with Constantinople developed in the seventh century suggest a strong Greek tradition.<sup>210</sup> A passage in the seventh century *Passio Sancti Apollinaris* in which a Greek tribune speaks disparagingly of the Romans suggests that some officers were regarded as distinctively Greek in Ravenna. On the other hand, the same text shows a degree of

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<sup>204</sup> Anualdus *tribunus*: LC 353; Anualdus *chartularis*: LPI, 491; Toto: LPI, 468-470; for Guntarius and Theodorus *locoservator*: RF, II, no. 41, and V, no. 1221. On other contracts of landed possessions between Lombards, Romans and Goths, see A. Guillou (1969) 109-110, 308-315.

<sup>205</sup> J. Jarnut (1972) 110-114, 322-366.

<sup>206</sup> Wickham (1981) 67-71.

<sup>207</sup> S. C. Fanning (1981) 241-258.

<sup>208</sup> In the same order: *P. Ital. 18-19* (Stefanus), *P. Ital. 33* (Isacius).

<sup>209</sup> P. Charanis (1946) 74-86.

<sup>210</sup> Diehl (1888) 241-242, 275-88; Guillou (1974) 152-190; C. Mango (1973) 683-719.

antagonism between Greek and Roman which implies that most of the ruling class saw itself by this time as Latin and local in its outlook.<sup>211</sup> Other evidence confirms that although a Greek presence existed it had by the seventh century little impact on the local culture which remained firmly Latin. This is confirmed by the limited use of Greek terms in the Ravenna Papyri, as well as Agnellus' history and the Anonymous Cosmography; the vocabulary and the assumptions remain firmly Latin. In Apulia and Calabria there are strong arguments in favor of a large-scale immigration of troops, officials and refugees from the East (as a result of the barbarian invasions), but direct evidence for Easterners owning considerable pieces of land in the south in the seventh and eight centuries does not exist.<sup>212</sup>

For the rest of Italy we can point to a few officials who, presumably, owned land in the northern parts of the peninsula. In the seventh century imperial secretaries are recorded in Rome, while in the early eighth century an *imperialis a secretis* called Megistus is recorded in the Ravenna Papyri; perhaps he owned land as well.<sup>213</sup> However, the importance of landowners from the East can only be assessed in the context of the number of eastern immigrants in general. Some can be identified by Iranian or Semitic elements in their name, or by the Greek language of the inscriptions in which they figure, and others are characterized as Greek, Syrian, or Alexandrine in the sources.<sup>214</sup> Armenians are particularly common as officers or soldiers in the sixth century, but by 639 the members of an originally Armenian unit were Latins or at least Latinized immigrants; but, although we can almost be sure that at least the higher officers eventually owned some land, there is no direct evidence for this, or of landownership by more common soldiers.<sup>215</sup>

One scholar, André Guillo, has attempted to gauge the proportion of 'easterners' to 'Latins' in the area around Ravenna on the basis of names. His calculations purported to show that the proportion of Goths and easterners was 16% and 14% respectively before 584 AD (his date for 'the creation of the exarchate') and 7% and 43% thereafter. However, serious flaws in

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<sup>211</sup> Greek tribune can be found in: *Aa. Ss. Iulii*, v, 345.

<sup>212</sup> Usage of Greek in the Ravenna Papyri: *P. Ital.* 6 (subscription) *P. Ital.* 8, *P. Ital.* 17 (in subscription), *P. Ital.* 18-19; for Agnellus' Latin history and predominantly other Latin vocabularies, see: Guillou (1969) 84-88, 113-114, 226; for other interpretations: B. Bischoff (1967) 246-275.

<sup>213</sup> Imperial secretaries in Rome that own land and have an eastern background: Azimarchus *scribo*, *GR* ix.57, 63, 73, 77; Busa *scribo*, *GR* v.30; Longinus *strator*, *GR* iii. 61; for Megistus *imperialis a secretis* see: *P. Ital.* 17.

<sup>214</sup> Iranian: Zabarda *dux Sardiniae*, *GR*. iv. 25; Greek: Plato *illustris*, *LP* I, 385; Syrian: Jewish: Basilius, *GR* ix. 104; Ioseph, *GR* i. 34; Nostamnus, *GR* ix. 40; Salpingus, *GR* i. 42; Alexandrine: Abramius, *GR* x. 21; Petrus *negotians*, *CIL* x.7330.

<sup>215</sup> Outside from the Ravenna Papyri: Bahan *magister militum*, *GR* ix.99; Tzittas *miles*: *P. Dip.* 122; Tzittas *comes et tribunus*: *CIL* v. 7793; (T)Zitta *magister militum*: *GR* x. 10; in the Ravenna Papyri: *P. Ital.* 22 shows the Greco-Latin name of Paulacis *numeri Arminiorum*, but although he is part of an Armenian unit, his father Stephanus (in the same document deemed Stefani *primicerii numeri Veronensium*) is part of a non-Armenian unit.

his technique invalidate his conclusion that a large influx of easterners took place in the period of the exarchate; which makes it hard to conclude that there was indeed a considerable number of landowners of eastern origin. Namely, the number of documents is too small and their chronological distribution too haphazard to furnish a representative sample for statistical analysis. There is plentiful epigraphic evidence of easterner's resident in Italy from the fourth century to the sixth; indeed, their numbers fall off at a point when Guillou postulated large-scale immigration. Still, study of the number of eastern landowners in Italy requires a full analysis of the various occupational categories and of their particular contribution to society. Also, the numbers of eastern immigrants in the landholding sector must have fluctuated with economic conditions.<sup>216</sup> Guillou also begged the question of how soon the eastern immigrant might become 'neutralized'; the assimilation of easterners into local society in Italy appears to have been remarkably rapid, and it is therefore wholly possible, as with the Goths and Lombards, that we do not see that much of the eastern landowner in the Ravenna Papyri simply because he had completely commuted.<sup>217</sup>

## 2.6 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to find a social structure behind the landholdings that we see in the Ravenna Papyri, and determine the social-economic position of each of these groups. We have investigated three groups: Peasants, middle-large landowners, and the large landowners. At the end, we also determined the social position of several cultural groups; the Goths, Lombards and individuals who came from the East.

In the Ravenna Papyri, there is not much evidence to determine the social-economic position of the peasant. Often, narratives and evidence are overshadowed by the appearance of wealthier actors, such as the larger landowner, or the aristocrat. From what we can see, however, a rather strong social and economic position can be inferred. The *P. Ital.* peasant was not, as had been the case before, a tenant in the sense of a tied serf; contractual lengths certainly say so. Rather, most of these individuals were proprietors in their own right. Furthermore, the fact that some papyri were an initiative from the peasant, suggests a strong social position. And, economically speaking, the fragmentation of property was surely a benefit for the peasant proprietor. It was not all fun and games, however. These peasants were part of an age were

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<sup>216</sup> Guillou (1969) 78-80, 95; for epigraphic evidence of easterners and other, see: I. Kajanto (1963); Diehl (1888) 257-259.

<sup>217</sup> Unreliability of names as an index of ethnic origin: Toubert (1973) 693.

flooding, war and plague were, more often than not, a regularity.<sup>218</sup> And, certainly, most aristocrats, even when they were not able to tie peasants to their land, held a strong judicial position from which they exerted power over their non-wealthy neighbors.

There is much more evidence for the position of the medium landowner in the Ravenna Papyri. Artisans, merchants, bankers: They all invested in landed property. Although the Ravenna Papyri might suggest that their number was stable, it is likelier that their number dropped considerably after the sixth century. References to them, for instance, remain scarce. And, it would certainly explain why we see so many artisans selling their property to military individuals; their political and economic position was, in any case, changing, and not for the better. There is, however, evidence for a distinct stratum of civilian landowners who, in times of (short) prosperity, might have been able to reach the status of aristocrat.

We also looked at the social-economic position of those who owned most land, that is military landowners and bureaucratic officials. Though there are precedents for bureaucrats owning land, military landownership seems new; at least, in this quantity. Both groups were able to amass large pieces of property, and they were most likely the only ones to do so. Their offices brought them riches, with which they were able to acquire even more pieces of land. It is wholly possible that a large group of *possessores* joined this group of landowners; certainly, the knowledge that certain offices brought forth wealth must have attracted them. And, the military presumably embraced the group because of a shortage of manpower.

A more problematic debate surrounds the use of slaves. In the Ravenna Papyri, there is almost no evidence for slaves working on land. This is strange, for there is enough evidence that suggests their existence. That we, still, do not see them can be explained by several facts: (1.) In and around Rome, the use of slaves on agricultural property died out. As most of the Ravenna Papyri focus on landholdings in the north, and near Rome, we can expect there to have happened something similar. (2.) Slaves were not purchased due to poor economic conditions; there were not enough resources. (3.) When slaves were acquired, they were not used in agricultural production, as they were deemed too valuable. Thus, at times of crisis, when landlords were not able to use slaves, other options had to be considered. *P. Ital. 3* is an example of such a moment: Instead of slaves, the landlord used *coloni*, who he rented for a considerable time. The papyrus fits into the meta-narrative of Kyle Harper, who suggests that the change from slave-based agricultural landholdings to feudal landholdings was very slowly, but complete.

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<sup>218</sup> Grey (2016) 263-295.

Lastly, we considered the position and (non-) presence of several groups. Goths are attested numerously in the Ravenna Papyri, and seemed to have attained a position of some social status. Lombards do not appear in the Ravenna Papyri, and easterners only appear sporadically. It is difficult to say something about volume, however, since not all Goths, Lombards and Easterners held their original names. They changed them to Latin ones, to assimilate.

# 3

## Modes of Transfer:

### Buying, selling, donating and inheriting

One of the most revealing aspects of any society is the distribution of wealth. In the late antique world, and definitely earlier and later, the stratification of landholdings essentially determined the stratification of wealth. There were, to be sure, many other kinds of wealth: Funds and commodities for lending, urban rental property, productive enterprises, slaves, ships and so on.<sup>219</sup> To some extent these were no doubt owned by the same people who owned agricultural land – the Ravenna Papyri do indicate so.<sup>220</sup> But land occupied a unique position in the economy of antiquity because of its ideological aspect. Landed property, and the accumulation thereof was seen as the absolute summum of wealth and ownership in the ancient world.<sup>221</sup> Thus, not only material wealth was derived from the land's soil, status came with it too.

There is something paradoxical, however, about the ideology associated with landownership and the circulation of such 'stable' wealth. Why would a piece of property be transferred if it provided the owner not only with riches, but also with social prominence? One would expect, logically, that the owner would stick to his property; defending it, objecting to its transfer of ownership. The Ravenna Papyri absolutely show us the opposite, namely that there was a circulation of property, of both small and large pieces.<sup>222</sup> The aim of this chapter is to explain that circulation, by reassessing the different modes of transfer whereby land circulated.

Modes of transfer and not mode of transfer, as in plural not singular, because there were different options. Some of them more obvious than others: Land circulated because of people selling it, or buying it, but also through practices of inheritance, and by donations. Following, these modes of transfer had implications on social-economic levels of society. Wealth, cliché

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<sup>219</sup> Funds and commodities: Banaji (2001) 39-45; urban rental property: K. Sessa (2018) 88, 89; I. B. Lippolis (2007) 223; enterprises: Banaji (2001) 218; slaves: Harper (2011); ships: Duncan-Jones (1977) 331-332.

<sup>220</sup> See 2.2 'Medium landowners: Civilians, merchants and artisans' in Chapter 2 for different professions, such as shipmaster, banker, and tight manufacturer.

<sup>221</sup> Bagnall (1995) 75-80.

<sup>222</sup> See Chapter 1.

though the phrase is, generates power. More specifically, concentrations of wealth allow for such means as are necessary in almost all societies for access to government, or the right to govern.<sup>223</sup> These means can range from the purchase of a neighbor's land, to donations where wealth is accumulated intensively into one institution, in our case the Church or the military bureaucracy.<sup>224</sup> There is a self-reinforcing effect in this: To the extent that individuals with power succeed in encouraging the accumulation of wealth, this should in turn empower others to seek close relationship, who, on their part, enrich those in power.<sup>225</sup> It is not uncanny that so many aristocrats opted to take part in the leading structures of the Church or the military bureaucracy: These were the places to get rich, to get social prominence.

There is not one debate that is concerned solely with the circulation of land and ownership, or its modes of transfer. Logically, debates started with explaining every mode of transfer by its own. For instance, there is quite some extensive literature on the application of donations in the late antique world (and the early middle ages).<sup>226</sup> Similarly, scholars have focused on explaining ancient inheritance practices, or Roman land-economies.<sup>227</sup> But there is, to my knowledge, not one piece of literature that fits all modes together. But should we expect this? The Ravenna Papyri are, thus far, the only set of papyri that list documents of estate management, together with matters of sale, inheritance and donation. All other ancient sources list one of the former, sometimes two, but never altogether.

Our aim correlates closely with other inquiries. For instance, it can be associated with the question how the Catholic Church was able to acquire so much (landed) property in so little time.<sup>228</sup> Likewise, it ties into the debate whether the destructive circumstances of these later centuries had any kind of impact on existing economies.<sup>229</sup> If so, we should surely be able to discern some hints, signs, or indications.

Also, an analysis on the different modes of transfer questions the mechanisms that define a market. Of course, in chapter 1 and 2 we have seen strong indications for a land market; but the exchange of land does not define a market. We can only speak of a market when: (1) There is a large number of buyer or sellers; (2) there is an idea of property rights; (3) there are rational

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<sup>223</sup> C. Rapp (2005) 7, 8.

<sup>224</sup> For the accumulation of wealth into these two specific institutions, see: Rapp (2005) 3-22.

<sup>225</sup> See also the conclusion of Ryan McConnell who observed the same effect in the governance of the Apion estates. See: R. McConnell (2017) 2, 95-120, 120-127.

<sup>226</sup> D. E. Trout (1996) 175-185; P. Allen, B. Neil, W. Mayer (2009); I. SanPietro (2014).

<sup>227</sup> Inheritance practices: A. J. Marshall (1975) 82-87; E. Champlin (1991); A. Arjava (1998) 147-165; J. Hillner (2003) 129-145; J. C. Tate (2008) 237-248; Rowlandson, R. Takahashi (2009) 104-138; Roman land economies: Bagnall (1992) 128-149; Sarris (2004) 55-72; MacCoull (2011) 243-246; S. Bernard (2016) 317-338.

<sup>228</sup> For this discussion (amongst others), see: G. R. Monks (1953) 349-362; Janes (1998); Rapp (2005); Moorhead (2015) 1, 2, 72, 164.

<sup>229</sup> See the discussion of Cam Grey for a summary of this debate: Grey (2016) 285-289.

buyers and sellers; (4) products are comparable; (5) there are no defining externalities that influence buyers or sellers indefinitely.<sup>230</sup> Only at the moment that each of these parameters, as we might call them, are sufficient, plentiful and acceptable, we can speak of a ‘healthy’ exchange.

There are also some inquiries which cannot be fully (or partly) answered, even though they are closely related to our individual modes of transfer. We cannot be sure, for example, what the prime sociological reasons must have been for individuals to buy property, or sell it, or donate it, and so on. In these documents, precise and clear motivations are often lacking, aside from the obvious monetary gain; or they remain hidden behind rules and staged interplay.<sup>231</sup> The only thing that we can say for certain is that there was not one all deciding motivation to transfer ownership.<sup>232</sup>

### **3.1 Partible inheritance, inheritance practices and the status of women**

Little has been written about the practical effects relating to an important aspect of late antique economics, law and social history: The system of intergenerational transfer of wealth.<sup>233</sup> In the case that scholars have written about it, it concerns mainly inheritance practices in the Roman Republic, ancient Greece, or Roman Egypt.<sup>234</sup> Why, then, is there almost no literature about inheritance in Late Antiquity? The answer is fairly simple: All of the inheritance practices that have been discovered thus far concern systems of partible inheritance. Only the position of women, and heirs, seems to have changed, but never indefinitely. Primogeniture, though important for our understanding of early medieval economies, appears much later (in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century) and is therefore rightfully left out of the equation.<sup>235</sup>

That should not seclude us, of course, from grasping the peculiarities of inheritance in the Ravenna Papyri. In these papyri there are several hints towards inheritance practices.

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<sup>230</sup> These are just some parameters, but they are sufficient in the context of Late Antiquity. Other parameters can be added, but most of them cannot be deduced from the Ravenna Papyri, or are in relation to more modern markets. See: A. O’Sullivan, S.M. Sheffrin (2003) 28.

<sup>231</sup> In ‘The end of politics? Studies in Roman political culture from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.’ L. E. Tacoma shows that the Ravenna Papyri are a prime example of late Roman bureaucratic interplay. See: L. E. Tacoma (forthcoming 2018).

<sup>232</sup> I have added a list of the transfers of property in the Ravenna Papyri in Appendix 3.

<sup>233</sup> For definitions of partible inheritance in Late Antiquity, see: R. P. Saller (2007) 87-112; Banaji (1999) 205; S. R. Huebner, G. Nathan (2017) 12, 17; from these works the definition of partible inheritance can best be described as a system of inheritance in which (landed) property is apportioned among heirs.

<sup>234</sup> For the Roman Republic to the second century AD, see: Champlin (1991); Marshall (1975) 82-87; for the Greek world, see: R. L. Fox (1985) 208-232; S. Hodkinson (1986) 378-406; D. Schaps (1975) 53-57; B. Griffith-Williams (2012) 145-162; C. A. Cox (1989) 34-46; D. Asheri (1963) 1-21; for Roman Egypt, see: Rowlandson, Takashi (2009) 104-139; for two articles that treat inheritance in Late Antiquity, see: Hillner (2003) 129-145; Arjava (1998) 147-165.

<sup>235</sup> T. F. Ruiz (2004) 87-109; Wickham (1981).



Unfortunately, only three papyri, *P. Ital. 4-5, 6* and *7*, provide something useful. Other papyri, such as *P. Ital. 46*, were undoubtedly also a reaction to or byproduct of inheritance, but they are remarkably vague or too damaged to be of any help. This makes that we have to direct our full attention exclusively to *P. Ital. 4-5, 6* and *7*.

*P. Ital. 4-5* documents an account of the *curia* of Ravenna. In the account, two notaries of the prefect of Ravenna argue with two *defensores*, Thomas and Cyprianus, whether some testaments should be accepted into the Church's archive – presumably the archive where the Ravenna Papyri originate from. Apparently, the documents had been accepted before. Yet, the Byzantine siege of Ravenna had damaged the archive badly, causing the loss of some documents that had authenticated the legitimacy of several wills.<sup>236</sup> Whatever the case, of the twelve hearings only three survive, which are in reasonable condition. In all three cases the Church is noted as sole inheritor of the property, occasionally excluding slaves.<sup>237</sup> Sadly, the identity of the owners of the testaments remains unclear, as well as the inheritance.

*P. Ital. 6* is a testament, with the very precise dating of 1 April 575, that belongs to Manna, son of Nanderit.<sup>238</sup> The document states that when Manna dies he leaves all his possessions to the Church.<sup>239</sup> Only the slaves, a man named Albanio together with his wife and daughter, are excluded in the testament; they are to be set free when the time comes.<sup>240</sup> Although not much is known about Manna, or Nanderit for that matter, we can infer a couple of things from the document. As the names suggest Manna and his father are of Gothic descent. Both carry the title of *vir devotus*, indicating at least some form of status. Their profession remains, at first sight, unclear; this is perhaps odd, simply because this is the norm in many other Ravenna Papyri.<sup>241</sup> The inclusion of two military officials as witnesses, however, indicates that both Manna and Nanderit had some sort of military background.<sup>242</sup> Sadly, because

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<sup>236</sup> See Tjäder (1955) 200.

<sup>237</sup> *P. Ital. 4-5*: '...quos quasque liberos liberevae esse iussero, hii omnes liberi liberevae sint totae' (first testament), and 'Quoscumque autem liberos esse iussero vel voluero, hii liberi sint toti fiantque' (third testament).

<sup>238</sup> *P. Ital. 6*: 'Testamentum vitalem Mannanis viri devote, factum sub die V Kalendas Martias, imperante domino nostro Iustino perpetuo Augusto anno decimo, post consulatum eius anno septimo, indictione octava, Ravennae, ex commendatione Iohannis viri strenui reseratus est sub die Kalendrum Aprilium, imperante domino nostro Iustino perpetuo Augusto anno decimo, post consulatum eiusdem secundum anno septimo, indictione octava, Ravennae.'

<sup>239</sup> *P. Ital. 6*: '...ipso praesente et subscribente, atque ei testamentum relictum, per quo contituit heredum sanctam ecclesiam catholicam Ravennate, testis subscribsi.'

<sup>240</sup> *P. Ital. 6*: 'Albione cum uxore et filia ingenuos esse volo, civesque Romanos.'

<sup>241</sup> See 2.2 'Medium landowners: Civilians, merchants and artisans' in Chapter 2 for different professions, such as shipmaster, banker, and tight manufacturer.

<sup>242</sup> *P. Ital. 6*: 'Iohannis vir strenuus, filius quondam Ianurai prefectiani', 'Emilianus vir devotus, scriniarius gloriosae sedis.'

the document has not been preserved in its fullest form, there is not much more evidence to obtain.

*P. Ital. 7* records a hearing before the *curia* in 557 AD and seems to reflect Gothic conflict. The Gothic widow Gundihild (*inlustris femina*) asks for the appointment of a *tutor* for her two sons, Lendarit and Landarit, who are still minors and are unable to defend their property against three Gothic soldiers, Adiud (*inlustris vir*), Rosemud (*vir magnificus*), and Gundirit (*vir magnificus*), who had begun to encroach upon it. The widow's husband, Gudahals (*vir inlustris*) had died a short while ago, perhaps a couple of days before the hearing, but had previously been defending the rights to his property in court. Gundihild was not present at court, and, unfortunately, the document does not tell us why. Whatever the case, the well-drafted and moving request of Gundihild is read out before the *curiales*, the council's participants, who ordered it entered into the *gesta*.<sup>243</sup> What follows is the record of a drawn-out process, in very formulaic speech, of lecturing a guardian, named Flavianus, and then his guarantor (*fideiussor*), a man called Liberatus, about whether they completely comprehend the importance their obligations; they accept.<sup>244</sup> The widow's choice of a *tutor* and guarantor with Roman names was probably wise: Sometime between 557 AD and 565 AD, Justinian ordered that all property belonging to the Goths to be confiscated and given to the Ravennate church. Another papyrus shows this process: The *fiscales* of the state presented to the archbishop of Ravenna, Agnellus, a list of rents and taxes that had to be collected.<sup>245</sup>

Although the three documents enjoy enough similarities, there are differences to be named. The evidence from *P. Ital. 7* gives reason to believe that partible inheritance, even in the sixth century, was the norm: When Gundihild died, and when the boys came of age, Lendarit and Landarit inherited an equal part of the wealth.<sup>246</sup> Nothing gets divided in the case of *P. Ital. 4-5*, and *6*, however: Here the sole inheritor is the Ravennate Church, not some close family member.<sup>247</sup> The fact that Manna and the unnamed individuals in *P. Ital. 4-5* name the Church as

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<sup>243</sup> It seems the copy we have is that of the tutor, which he obtained from a Constantine, 'vir devotus et comitiacus', and which Constantine obtained 'from originals' (*ex autentico edidi*). *Comitiacus* seems to have been a military office, as seen in Cassiodorus' *Variae*, 2.10, 5.6, 6.13, 7.31.

<sup>244</sup> In *P. Ital. 7* we see such questions as: 'Si eandem specialem tutelam libenter adsumis, aut moderanter vel legiliter administras, oportet te nobis praesentibus confiteris'; 'Cumque Liberatus honestus introductus, Horanius, Antonius adque Volusianus, sed et cunctus ordo dixerunt: Quare te praesens Flavianus vir honestus in concilio nostro deduxit?'; 'Horanius, Antonius adque Volusianus, sed et cunctus ordo dixerunt: Libenter huius tutelae fideiussor accedes?'

<sup>245</sup> *P. Ital. 2*; Brown (1979) 7; for confiscations see: Agnellus, *LP*, 85-86; Jones (1964) 820-821; Wickham (2005) 64-66.

<sup>246</sup> *P. Ital. 7*: '...cum viduae matris non possint infirmitate defendi, propter aetatis invicillitatem adversantum fraudibus ipsi vel eorum facultates occumbat.'

<sup>247</sup> *P. Ital. 6*: '...ipso praesente et subscribente, atque ei testamentum relictum, per quo contituit heredum sanctam ecclesiam catholicam Ravennate, testis subscripsi.'

unique inheritor is quite normal. As has often been concluded by scholars, individuals with no offspring normally decided to leave all their property to the Church – this was, perhaps, expected of them.<sup>248</sup> In other cases, when parents do have a son, or daughter, or at least an heir, property is given to both the Church and the chosen relative.<sup>249</sup>

*P. Ital. 6*, as a will, differs quite a lot from the well-known pre-Christian testaments from a few centuries earlier. Formerly, testaments, or wills, were expressions of emotion.<sup>250</sup> Fundamentally and implicitly, they offer an index of likes and dislikes, followed by the concern for the future well-being of loved ones when the parent (or *defensor*) was no longer there to protect them. The will of Manna possesses nothing of the above. But, in the end, in the testament itself, the message is notably formal, sober, and straightforward: His property is left to the Church, and that is it. In cases where not only the Church but also relatives were named as heir, it is possible that affection was also held back; though sources outside the Ravenna Papyri indicate the opposite.<sup>251</sup>

Once, testaments provided the living with the deceased's final judgments. It was in the person's will that his true character came forth – praised or blamed as the final mirror of one's identity.<sup>252</sup> Often, the will was read out in front of the relatives of the deceased man or woman. It could be a spectacle, subject to the utmost respect and willful attention.<sup>253</sup> Manna's testament, however, emits a tone of complete formality. There is no spectacle, there is only a transaction. Nothing (praiseworthy) is said about Manna, apart from the fact that he had confirmed the authenticity of the document before his death.<sup>254</sup> And, so it seems, the information in his will was a matter of privacy, not something to boast with: When his testament was opened there was no feast, or someone to restate his legacy.

In all antique wills and testaments, it was fundamental, almost mandatory, to include the Emperor as an heir.<sup>255</sup> In Christian wills, however, that prerequisite was taken over by the Church.<sup>256</sup> In former times, the inclusion of the emperor in a will was often something to boast

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<sup>248</sup> A. D. Lee (2015) 238; Janes (1998) 136-139; another good example of a family leaving everything to the Church, with no heirs, is that of Guinifred of Pistoia in 767 AD, see: *CDL* 2/206.

<sup>249</sup> Janes (1998) 136-139.

<sup>250</sup> L. Boyer (1965) 333-408; Hopkins (1983) 235-247; Champlin (1991) 8.

<sup>251</sup> Vuolanto (2015) 212.

<sup>252</sup> Champlin (1991) 8-12.

<sup>253</sup> Champlin (1991) 24.

<sup>254</sup> *P. Ital. 6*: 'Iohannis vir strenuus huic testamentum rogatus a Mannane viro devote, filio guondam Nanderit, ipso praesente et suscribente, atque ei testamentum relictum, per quo constituit heredem sanctam ecclesiam catholicam Ravennate, testis subscripsi.'

<sup>255</sup> See the following works for inheritances including or excluding the emperor: R. S. Rogers (1947) 140-158; E. Bund (1978) 51-55; K. P. Müller-Eiselt (1982) 287-304.

<sup>256</sup> The Church is included in every testament or gift that we know from Late Antiquity and the early middle ages thus far, as was the case with the emperor before; SanPietro (2014) 82, 197, 202

about. In *P. Ital.* 4-5, and 6 we see the opposite: The inclusion of the Church seems to have been necessary, nonetheless not something to vaunt. But, most importantly, though the Emperor often declined someone's inheritance out of gratitude, the Church accepted it. Certainly, it shows why the Church accumulated so much wealth in a rather short period. Indeed, if we expect almost every ancient Christian individual to have included the Church and add the high mortality rate characteristic for pre-industrial societies, it must have meant a continuous source of wealth for this ecclesiastical institution.<sup>257</sup>

Some things did not change, however, or changed little. In pre-Christian testaments positive judgements and decisions were more often than not the norm. These judgements praised and glorified heirs, legatees and slaves to be freed. Similarly, in the case of Manna's testament his slaves are to be set free. There is no glorification of heirs in these testaments, however, not of the Church or relatives, but the fact that glorification of the Church seems necessary in other *P. Ital.* documents (even when the Church has no direct interest) suggests that it might have occurred in testaments as well.<sup>258</sup>

But what do the documents say about the position of women? Although *P. Ital.* 7 documents Gundihild, and primarily displays her as a strong and rather important figure, it does not say much about the actual position of women in inheritance practices. If we want to answer that question, we should look into the social-status of other women in the Ravenna Papyri. How did they faire?

In the entirety of the Ravenna Papyri we have evidence for twenty individual women who sell, buy, donate or work on property. Of those women, three are slaves, and one is said to be a former slave.<sup>259</sup> Six are seen wearing an extensive title, such as *clarissima*, *vir illustris*, or *spectabilis*, and seven don a more common title, often *honesta femina* or *vir devotus*.<sup>260</sup> Of the first group, there is nothing to question their independence: Although the man of Gundirit, the deceased Gudahals, is named in *P. Ital.* 7, she seems to be the sole owner of her property; in *P. Ital.* 8, Germana, the widow of Collictus, approaches a guardian by the name of Gratianus

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<sup>257</sup> Nathan (2000) 134; see also the article of Brent Shaw, who discusses the influence of death in Imperial Rome: B. D. Shaw (1996) 100-138.

<sup>258</sup> For instance, see *P. Ital.* 4-5: 'Te itaque, sanctam catholicam matrem Ravennatem ecclesiam, in qua omnes populus cristianus exorat...', such iterations can be seen in most papyri that include the Church.

<sup>259</sup> Female slaves: Spouse Albanio (no name given), in *P. Ital.* 6; daughter Albanio (no name given), in *P. Ital.* 6; Ranihilda, in *P. Ital.* 8; former slave: Sisivera, in *P. Ital.* 20.

<sup>260</sup> Women with extensive titles: Gundihild *vir illustris* (*P. Ital.* 7); Germana *clarissima femina* (*P. Ital.* 8); Maria *femina spectabilis* (*P. Ital.* 12); Ranilo *sublimis femina* (*P. Ital.* 13); Flavia Xantippe *femina gloriosissima* (*P. Ital.* 17); Wililiwa *clarissima femina* (*P. Ital.* 28); women with common titles: Martyria *femina honesta* (*P. Ital.* 14-15); Aurelia *vir femina* (*P. Ital.* 25); Johanna *vir devotus* (*P. Ital.* 23); Thulgilo *honesta femina* (*P. Ital.* 30); Domnica *honesta femina* (*P. Ital.* 30); Rusticiana *honesta femina* (*P. Ital.* 37); Riccifrida *honesta femina* (*P. Ital.* 43).

all by herself; *P. Ital. 12* documents that Maria has made a donation to the Church of Ravenna with her husband, but after he dies, she does so again but all by herself; in *P. Ital. 17* the father of Flavia Xantippe is mentioned, but his consent is, apparently, not needed for Flavia to donate an extensive amount of landed properties to the Church; and, *P. Ital. 28* shows that Wililiwa gives a considerable amount of property to the Church, without the consent of her husband. There is only one instance, in the first group, wherein a woman needs a man's consent: In *P. Ital. 13* a donation is made by Ranilo, yet the husband is asked to sign the document to confirm its authenticity.<sup>261</sup>

In the second group of papyri, we can see women act independently, or with consent of their husband: In *P. Ital. 14-15* a donation is made by Martyria, but only after the consent of her husband; *P. Ital. 23* records a donation from a husband and wife, yet the wife, Johanna, is recorded just as many times as the husband; in *P. Ital. 25* a family is gifted a considerable amount of properties, and although both the husband and woman receive it, the husband's presence is stronger throughout the document; in *P. Ital. 30* two women, Thulgilo and Domnica, want to sell a piece of property, but this is only done after the consent of the son Deutherius; *P. Ital. 37* documents Rusticiana who wants to sell a piece of land, but she only succeeds after the consent of her husband, Tzitta; lastly, in *P. Ital. 43*, the spouses Riccifrida and Waduulfus are defending themselves in a lawsuit, and Riccifrida has as much to say as her husband.

As the documents show, in some cases women had as much to say as men. In others, the husband's consent was necessary to conclude the deal. The second we see more in the case of women with a common dignitary title, whereas women with an extensive title seemed to have enjoyed more freedom. It is wholly possible that different strata of society developed contrasting reactions to the status of women. In other periods, and areas, this has often been the case.<sup>262</sup> But the fact of the matter is that an independent economic power of women certainly existed and it was recognized.<sup>263</sup> Women of property had, sometimes, wide discretion over it in the Ravenna Papyri, and hence had an economic and social power perhaps exceptional for a traditional agrarian society. In other words, the quantity of property held by women may be less remarkable, in context, than the quality of their control over it.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> *P. Ital. 13*: 'Laurentius vir spectabilis huic donationi rogatus a Ranilone, sublimi femina, donatrice, eiusque iugele Felethanc, sublimi viro, quibus me presente relictata est, et signa fecerunt, testis subscripsi, et me presente est tradita donatio.'

<sup>262</sup> H. Becker (2016) 915-932.

<sup>263</sup> On women with economic power, and as property owners: D. Hobson (1983) 311-321.

<sup>264</sup> See also the points made on the position of women in donations on page 74.

Nevertheless, the notion that we get 13 women from 59 papyri, a rough ratio of 1 to 5, in the ownership of property, if correct, remains a fundamental figure of importance. Basically, it shows that women did have something to say. And it is more than cogent to expect the same notion of independence in matters of inheritance. As Edward Champlin has shown in regard to the Late Republic, in eras where women have more to say, women naturally inherit more.<sup>265</sup> Surely, in both periods of time, the Late Republic as well as Late Antiquity, daughters were not equal to sons, and women were not equal to men, but the demands of natural affection have always been strong.<sup>266</sup> When a testament had to be made for someone without a son, and he or she was forced to choose between a daughter and an extraneous male, however close, the daughter likely succeeded.<sup>267</sup>

### 3.2 Contracts of purchase and transfer letters

In Roman law, sale (*emptio-venditio*), along with lease, partnership and mandate, was a consensual contract, which means that the obligation of the seller and buyer were created by their mutual consensus, or agreement, rather than by a physical act, by one of them, such as handing over money; a well written and elaborately organized document, a contract, or letter of transfer, was needed to accomplish such.<sup>268</sup>

In the Ravenna Papyri we find a great amount of such contracts and transfer-letters, which are basically consensual contracts that accept a wide array of specific terms and conditions: In *P. Ital. 29*, the banker Flavius Basilius sells to a man called Rusticus, coming from Rome, a piece of land, but has to hand over the rights to the property at the location in person, and cannot send a delegate; in *P. Ital. 30*, a woman called Thulgilo and her daughter Domnicia sell a piece of land to Pelegrinus, though this could only be done after the good consent of her nephew Deutherius; in *P. Ital. 31*, a man called Domnicus sells a piece of property to a man called Montanus, though the contract is only accepted in the city council's *gesta* after two officials have checked Domnicus' consent back at his house, explained to him the peculiarities of the contract, after which they report back his approval of the matter to the council; in *P. Ital. 32*, the two friends (presumably, as they are not reported to be relatives) Milanius and Gerontius sell a rather small piece of property to a man called Laurentius, however the contract is only acknowledged by the officials after the two friends have provided the city

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<sup>265</sup> Champlin (1991) 118-120.

<sup>266</sup> For the status of women in Late Antiquity in respect to men, see: S. B. Pomeroy (1991) 263-268; Hillner (2003) 129-145; L. Alberici, M. Harlow (2007) 193-203; L. Dossey (2008) 3-40.

<sup>267</sup> Champlin (1991) 120; Hobson (1983) 315.

<sup>268</sup> J. Andreau (1999) xii, 24; R. Versteeg (2002) 366.

council with enough evidence to prove that they are, indeed, the precise owners of the piece of land; in *P. Ital. 33* a Gothic cleric called Minnulus sells a considerable piece of property to the soap manufacturer Isacius, but only after the second document, a copy of the contract, is accepted by both parties; in *P. Ital. 34* the same Minnulus sells another piece of property to a man called Petrus, and if the quality of the property is not equitable, or already taken, Minnulus has to pay double the price he asks; in *P. Ital. 35* a man called Domminus sells a piece of property to a man called Deusdedit, and in the case that Domminus does not hold up to the bargain, he has to pay double the price value and the coin that is needed to fix the disturbance; in *P. Ital. 36* the same Deusdedit sells a piece of property to a man called Hildigernus, who accepts the paid fourteen solidi, and that they are in good condition, and that he will not sue Domminus for the quality of this payment; in *P. Ital. 37* a woman called Rusticiana sells a large piece of property to a soldier called Iohannis, yet the contract is only acknowledge after the husband of Rusticiana, a soldier named Tzitta, has accepted the transaction. *P. Ital. 38-41 A-D*, and *42* seem to have had similar conditions, but most of the premises, actors and terms are unclear due to damage to the documents.

The consensus completed the sale, after which the seller was obliged to pay the purchase price. Normally, if the buyer did not pay the price, the seller could sue him in action or sale, *actio venditi*, whereas if the seller failed to deliver what he had promised, the buyer could sue under an action on purchase, *actio empti*.<sup>269</sup> In the Ravenna Papyri we only one such a case, namely *P. Ital. 43*. Although the document is quite vague on the specific circumstances, and on why the two spouses, Waduulfus and Riccifrida, sue a shipmaster called Leo, the words *beneficiarii expulsi* and *pro certis laboribus expensisque propriis* in the testimonials of several official witnesses imply that the circumstances under which the spouses had to work on the (leased) property were abominable. And, so it seems, this was due to Leo's fault; though we do not exactly know why.<sup>270</sup>

These actions, like others for consensual contracts, were defined in terms of good faith of the two parties, seller and buyer. In the Ravenna Papyri, the seller did not warrant the quality of the property being sold beyond the narrow requirement defined by good faith, and (fairly) high penalties. In Roman law, a sale did not create ownership. The seller was required to guarantee the buyer against being evicted from the property by someone with a better title;

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<sup>269</sup> A. Wilson, A. Bowman (2018) 87-89, 112, 115.

<sup>270</sup> Again, the piece points towards a fairly high status of lease-holders, who are not only eager to sue their lord, but are also able to pay for the customary fines necessary to complete the process. Thus, suing somebody was not reserved for the more wealthy or able freeholders, but also accessible for classes thereunder. For 'standardized lawsuits', see R. W. Mathisen (2012) 745-747.

commonly sale contracts included a penalty clause, the *stipulatio duplae*, according to which the seller would restore double the purchase price to the buyer in the event of eviction – such we see in P. Ital. 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, and 37.<sup>271</sup> Ownership of property was created either through formal conveyance, *mancipatio* or in *iure cessio*, which involved a formal act in front of witnesses to transfer the ownership of *res Mancipi*, land and the slaves and animals required to cultivate it, or through *usucapio*, when the property was conveyed informally.<sup>272</sup> Meeting the seller on the property itself, placing a ‘double-fine’ on those who had not held up their end of the bargain, and accepting the quality of the coin, were all ways of protecting the capability and exactitude of the method.<sup>273</sup>

Interestingly enough, a very large part of the sale-documents solely concerns Goths, not Romans, and can all be placed in the same period, approximately from the beginning of the sixth century to the end. And, just like the case of Gundihild (P. Ital. 7), P. Ital. 30 seems to represent conflict. A year before Belisarius took the city of Ravenna, the Gothic widow Thulgilo and her children sold land in Faenza to a soldier (*vir strenuus*) named Pelegrinus for 110 solidi; the witnesses were all officials or nobles associated with the official administration, including Julian the banker, and more official names were dropped in the description of the land.<sup>274</sup> Thulgilo states that she had drawn up a *diploma vacuole*, and that the sale was ‘accepted by the official *nummus*’ and with the consent of ‘Serapio *vir strenuus*’, who acted as weigher

<sup>271</sup> P. Ital. 30: ‘quas viginti iugera fundi suprascripti hac die distracta sunt sub evictionem legis dupla bona perpetuam’; P. Ital. 31: ‘evictum ablatumve quid fuerit, tunc quanti ea ris erit, quae evicta fuerint, dupplum numerum solidorum suprascriptorum sed et rei quoque melioratae’; P. Ital. 34: ‘adhibitis aevectionis duplariae robore partier adtributis’; P. Ital. 35: ‘tunc quanti ea res erit, quae evicta fuerit, duplum pretium suprascriptum quinque solidorum a suprascripto venditore et ab eiusque heredibus’; P. Ital. 36: ‘hac die distractas sunt sub evictionis nomine duplariae rei sub obligatione rerum suarem’; P. Ital. 37: ‘et tradederunt, iure optimo et legibus sub dupplariae rei et rei quoque melioratae’; that we do not see this clause in P. Ital. 32, 33, 38-41 A-D, 42 and 43 is most likely a result of the damage to the documents, not an unwillingness to put it in.

<sup>272</sup> Informal transfer or property: P. Ital. 29, 30, 31, 32; formal transfer of property: P. Ital. 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 43; P. Ital. 38-41 A-D and 42 are too vague to put them under one of the two transfers. Also, some of the papyri could be put under both determinants, such as P. Ital. 29 and 32. The distribution of the evidence, in any case, seems to point towards a trend from informal transfers to formal transfers.

<sup>273</sup> Meeting the seller on the property: P. Ital. 31; placing a double fine: see footnote 35; accepting the quality of the coin: P. Ital. 30: ‘rius venditores ab eundem emptorem Pelegrino viro strenuo iuxta placitum suum praetii nomine id est auri soldos dominicos, probitos, obriziacos, optimos, pensantes numero centum decem tantum’; P. Ital. 31: ‘et filiorum suorum, omni praetio inter eos placito et definito pro suprascriptas portiones ex duobos fundis et omnibus ad se pertinentibus auri solidos dominicos, optimos, pensantes numero quadraginta tantum’; P. Ital. 33: ‘pensantes numero viginti tantum in praesenti eidem Minnulo viro reverendo’; P. Ital. 35: ‘omnem pretium inter eos placitum et definitum auri solidos dominicos, probitos, obriziacos, integri ponderis, singulars numero quinque, que ei hac die dati, numerate et traditi sunt a suprascripto emptore’; P. Ital. 36: ‘iuxta placitum suum pretii nomine id est auri solidos dominicos, probatos, obriziacos, optimos, pensantes, integri ponderis, singulars numero quattordecim tantum’; P. Ital. 37: ‘sex iuncas id est auri solidos dominicos, obriziacos, optimos, pensantes numero viginti quattuor tantum, que eisdem venditoribus ac die dati, numerate et traditi sunt domi ex arca et ex sacullo suprascripti emptoris’; P. Ital. 42: ‘praetii nomini id est auri soledos Dominicus, provetus, obriziacus, optimum, pensant numero decem et tremisses duo tantum in praesenti.’

<sup>274</sup> P. Ital. 7 gives us: Antonius *vir honestus*, Volusianus *vir honestus*, Decoratus *vir honestus*, Maximus *vir honestus*, Vigilius *vir laudabilis*, Constantinus *vir devotus*.



(*libripens*), and one *Opilio vir strenuus*, who was a ‘distinguished witness’.<sup>275</sup> Following, in *P. Ital. 33* we see that the Jewish merchant Isacius, or Isaac, promptly brought the charters of his contract of sale with the Gothic cleric Minnulus to the *curia* of Ravenna, and asks for their registration ‘to protect his ownership’ (*ad munimen dominii mei*); this was shortly after the Gothic war.<sup>276</sup> The latter points towards a certain ‘double-check’ of property titles and contracts, as if the original owners were worried what would happen to their property.

### 3.3 Donations: To the Church, from the Church

By far the most present way that property is transferred in the Ravenna Papyri is through donating, or what we can call ‘charity property transfers’. In a total of seventeen papyri we see fourteen individuals gift property to the Church (*P. Ital. 12, 13, 14-15 A-B, 16, 17, 18-19 A-B, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28*), two gifts from the Church to civilians (*P. Ital. 25* and *44*), and one gift from a king, Odoacer, to a landlord, Pierrius (*P. Ital. 10-11 A-B*). In the following section we will focus in particular on donations from the Church and to the Church; *P. Ital. 10-11* will not be analyzed, as this has already been done before by many, and in chapter 1 as well.<sup>277</sup>

Gifts to the Church in the Ravenna Papyri corpus can be characterized by several social and documentary trends. First of all, they are ambiguous records of giving: People gave, but not necessarily to a Church’s bishop; Churches and bishops solicited giving, but did not necessarily get what they asked for, and what they got, they did not always keep. The last point is beautifully illustrated by *P. Ital. 25* and *44*. In *P. Ital. 25* the priest Octavianus gifts a piece of property to the salesman Martinus and his wife Aurelia. The gifts consist of 6/12<sup>th</sup> of a house and a garden, which means that the donation is assuredly a form of *Erbzinspacht* (*pacti conventionis donationisque chartula*), heritable tenure with a quitrent, as the other half is rented

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<sup>275</sup> *P. Ital. 30*: ‘Serapion vir strenuus, adiutor numerariorum, his instrumentis viginti iugerum fundi Concordiacus rogatus a Thulgilone honesta feminda, matre, et ab eiusque filiis Domnica honesta femina et Deuterio viro honesto, suprascriptis venditoribus, ipsis praesentibus testis subscripsi, et suprascriptum praetium auri solidos centum decem eis in praesenti traditus vidi.’; then the same array of words but starting with ‘Opilio vir strenuus’.

<sup>276</sup> *P. Ital. 33*. A fragmentary text that used the same formula may date a year earlier: In *P. Ital. 20* another Gothic widow cites ‘de sexu femineo Bellianus senatusconsultus’, that is the senatusconsultus Velleianum, probably dating from the mid first century AD; see H. Vogt (1952); it is also significant that the words ‘monumen’ (document) and ‘munimen’ (protection) are almost semantically fused together in the document, indicating that Isaac associated proper legal documents with a right to have land. Furthermore, this phrase only appears after 541 AD, replacing the older pre-Justinianic formula which used to ask the judge to change the tax records, thereafter requesting registration. For pre-Justinianic formulae: *P. Ital. 10-11, 12*.

<sup>277</sup> One of the best-known examples of another author treating *P. Ital. 10-11* is Peter Heather. See: P. Heather (2010) 506.

out.<sup>278</sup> Both Martinus and his wife are probably from Ravenna, as the document has been written there, which indicates that the house and garden were in the same place. Octavianus, however, works for the *Faventinian* church, not the central Ravennate one; this could suggest that he was not from Ravenna, but from Faenza, where the *faventinian* church had its roots. In any case, it shows, then, that citizens from Ravenna were not always reserved to the central church of their city, but could receive alms from other cities, and churches, as well. The donation certainly does not have to mean that both the salesman and his wife were poor. It could certainly be the case, for example, that they received the donation as a substitute or compensation for an earlier made donation; such was, in any case, a normal practice at the time.<sup>279</sup> *P. Ital. 44* is, luckily enough, far better preserved than *P. Ital. 25*: It lists a rather extensive letter from the *notarius* Paulus, who writes in name of Maurus, the bishop of Ravenna. Theodorus Calliopa, his wife Anna and their son receive a donation: 6/12<sup>th</sup> of a house, 4/12<sup>th</sup> of a bathing house, and 6/12<sup>th</sup> of a ‘family house’.<sup>280</sup> The donation cites that the family has to pay a yearly rent of seven golden coins (*solidi*) and that, some years later, the leasehold was given back to the Church of Ravenna; though we cannot be sure why.<sup>281</sup> Although the document is not very clear on the status of the family, we do know that the property itself formerly belonged to the father of Theodorus Calliopa, the praetorian-prefect Apollinaris.<sup>282</sup> This indicates that the family, if we expect Theodorus to have a similar rank to that of his fathers’, was wealthy.

Second, most of the people who gave to the Church, in the Ravenna Papyri, were wealthy, and had the sources to do so. To give a considerable list of examples: In *P. Ital. 12* we have Maria who wore the title *femina spectabilis*, and who owned considerable pieces of land; in *P. Ital. 13* we find Ranilo and Felithanc also wearing extensive honorary titles, *sublimis femina* and *vir sublimis*, and who also owned large pieces of property; in *P. Ital. 14-15 A-B*, Bonus and his wife Martyria, *vir honestus* and *vir femina*, own several large groups of slaves

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<sup>278</sup> *P. Ital. 25*: ‘...hanc pacti conventionis donationisque chartulam.’

<sup>279</sup> D. E. Trout (1996) 262.

<sup>280</sup> *P. Ital. 44*: ‘Et quoniam sperastis, uti SEX uncias principals in integro DOMUS cum superioribus et inferioribus et sex uncias familiarice, curte et orticellum in integro, et omnibus ad iacentibus et pertinentibus, atque Quattuor uncias balnei cum baso, fistulas et omne ordinatione sua, sed et alias sex uncias familiaricae positae super fluvio ante balne et orto praedictae domus, quae domus ex calce qaimento useque ad tigno constructa, tegulis et imbricibus una cum familiarica sua tecta, cum putae...’; ‘...veram etiam et SEX uncias DOMUS positae iuntra civitatem Arimensem cum curte, familiarica et omnibus mebris suis.’; quite characteristically for the text, all indications of the size of the property given (in twelfths) are written down exorbitantly big.

<sup>281</sup> *P. Ital. 44*: ‘...donec vos divinitas in ac luce iusserit perminare, sub SEPTINOS aureos infiguratos.’; the suggestion that the property went back to the Church comes from Tjäder. See: Tjäder (1982) 174: “Das in Erbpacht überlassene ist offenbar später an die Ravennatische Kirche zurückgegangen; bei dieser Gelegenheit ist unsere Urkunde in das Archiv gekommen.”

<sup>282</sup> *P. Ital. 44*: ‘...adque ex iura quondam Apollinari, aementissimae memoriae viri, genitoris vestry, per piam eius dispositionem ad nostrum sanctam pervenerunt ecclesiam secundum notitiam subter adnexa.’

and landholdings; in *P. Ital. 16* we see an important Roman landholder who is the leader of the Theodosian Numerus, and who carries the important office of weapons carrier (*spatario*); in *P. Ital. 17* we find Flavia Xantippe, who wears the important honorary title *femina gloriosissima*, daughter of the private secretary of the emperor (*Megistis imperialis a secretis*); *P. Ital. 18-19 A-B* presents the Greek Stefanus, holding the titles of *vir illustrius* and *magnificus*; *P. Ital. 21* names Deusdedit, who wears the title of *vir reverendus* and who, naturally, owned several large plots of land; *P. Ital. 23* notes Johannes, *vir clarissimus*, commander of the numerus of Ravenna (*Prim. Num. Rav.*); and *P. Ital. 28* tells of Wililiwa who bears the title of *clarissima femina*.

Only in the case of *P. Ital. 20* and *22* do we hear of common people donating to the Church, namely of Sisivera, formerly a slave, and Paulacis, a common soldier. In reality, of course, considerably more common and poor people donated pieces of property to the Church, and the evidence for this is quite extensive.<sup>283</sup> The most interesting case, however, is that of Goderisius of Rieti, which shows that common people gifted as much, perhaps more in proportion too, than their wealthier counterparts. Goderisius was taken to court in 791 AD for occupying land of the monks of Farfa that he had himself given them. He explained: ‘...it is true that I gave this property to the monastery; but afterwards I had sons, and now neither I nor my sons can live, for need oppresses me.’<sup>284</sup> That we see certain cases not in the Ravenna Papyri, certainly points towards the one-sidedness of the Ravenna archive.

Third, the full descriptions of the property being given are also one of the aspects of clearest continuity in these donations from the sixth century to the ninth. Property is defined more actively by its location than any other factor, but the description can also be rather simple.<sup>285</sup> For example, the donation (as usufruct) of Gaudosius (*P. Ital. 24*) in the mid-seventh century was a simple *hortus in integro*, furnished with a hut (*pergola*) and with use of the well and the garden attendants.<sup>286</sup>

Fourth, while property is not the only thing given to the Church, it is only in the sixth century that we find a variety of gifts to the Church of Ravenna explicitly listed. This is clearest

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<sup>283</sup> Wickham (1981) 108-109.

<sup>284</sup> *RF, II*, no. 153, and no. 154.

<sup>285</sup> A quite extensive description can be found in *P. Ital. 20*: ‘et si que alii adfines sunt, qua quemque tangit et populum, finibus, terminis, campis, pratis, pascuis, silvis, salectis, sationalibus, vines, arbustis, arboribus pomiferis, fructiferis et infructiferis, diversisque generibus, vineis, arbustis, arboribus pomiferis, fructiferis et infructiferis, diversisque generibus, rivis, fontibus, aquis perennis, liminibus, limitibusque suis omnibus omnique iure proprietateque eius.’; other examples of extensive descriptions can be found in: *P. Ital. 27, 28*.

<sup>286</sup> Another fairly short description of the property can also be found, for instance, in *P. Ital. 10-11*: ‘...et inquilinos sive servos, et circuissent omnes fines, terminus, agros, arbos, cultus, vel incultos, seu vineas, et traditione corporalis celebrata fuisset actoribus Pieri viri inlustris nullo contradicente’; and *P. Ital. 13*: ‘cum adtiguus colonicis subsequentibusque suis, finibus, terminis, servitutibusque earum, cum mancipiis, quae in designates massis esse noscontur.’

in the donation of Ranilo and Felithanc (*P. Ital. 13*), which includes shares in fully stocked and income generating property (6/12ths of two *massae*), silver coins, and clothing.<sup>287</sup> The pattern in the donations is that it moves from a variety of forms, from money, moveable objects, and property, to almost exclusively property by the seventh century.<sup>288</sup>

Fifth, and following from the latter point, it is interesting to note here that Ranilo is one of the three women who are also responsible for gifts; the first is the earliest recorded donation, which is fragmentary but features the known Maria (*P. Ital. 12*), without mention of a husband or father of note. Although the record of Maria's donation is badly damaged, it probably follows the same pattern as that of Ranilo, who has her husband witness the document, but it is clear that the gift does not belong to him. Similar is the donation of Sisivera (*P. Ital. 20*) who, alike Maria and Ranilo, defines herself not via a husband but rather through her connection to her *patrona*, the deceased Theudifara.

The final trend concerns the reasoning for making donations. More often than not, these are lost in the papyri. But, luckily, two donations make clear at least some of the mentality behind these gifts. Rather than acts of evergetism or of civic benefaction as normally seen in Late Antiquity, one of these texts shows a clear religious reasoning behind donation.<sup>289</sup> In *P. Ital. 16*, Iohannes, the *primicerius numeri felicium Theodosiacus*, donated half of his estate but clearly gives a reason: "...for the benefit of my soul."<sup>290</sup> The underlying sentiment is quite distinct from the traditional civic and Roman rationale for donations to these institutions, as they were originally a sign of status within the community, a way to demonstrate civic virtue, as well as a means to cement this role and project it rather than an end in itself.<sup>291</sup>

In addition to the example of the donation of Iohannes, the donation of Maria seems to display Gothic predicament, again. In 491 AD, while Theoderic was besieging the city (490–493 AD), the *defensores* of the Ravennate church registered before the curia a charter and an *epistula donationis* recording the donation of Maria (suggesting that her deceased husband was a military officer), to the church. Maria's *epistula* mentions that while she and her husband had drawn up a charter, his death meant 'that we could not register it (*eam allegare*), so now it has been necessary for me to write this letter in my own name' to reiterate the donation.<sup>292</sup> But it

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<sup>287</sup> The same wide array of properties (gardens, objects and landed property) can also be seen in *P. Ital. 8*, although in this document the description consists of almost fifty phrases.

<sup>288</sup> For a variety of goods in (early) donations, see: *P. Ital. 10-11, 12, 13, 14-15 A-B, 26, 27*; for low variety, or just landed property as a gift, see: *P. Ital. 16, 17, 18-19 A-B, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28*.

<sup>289</sup> For gifts inspired by traditional forms of evergetism: C. Haas (1997) 254; B. Neil (2009) 182-185.

<sup>290</sup> *P. Ital. 16*: 'per oblationem et remedium animae meae.'; can also be seen in *P. Ital. 20*: '...suprascriptae sancta ecclesiae Ravennati pro remedium animae meae im perpetuo possendendum.'

<sup>291</sup> For a good introduction on the traditional Roman rationale for donating, see: I. SanPietro (2014) 33-84.

<sup>292</sup> *P. Ital. 12*; Theoderic's siege: J. Moorhead (1992) 24-25; *Spectabilis*: Jones (1964) 143, 282, 528-529.

was not necessary: The only purpose for Maria's letter should have been to advise the *curia* to remove her name from the tax register (it may have done so, as the letter is fragmentary). Registration was the *defensores'* responsibility as the new owners, as Maria's charter rightfully indicates by containing the necessary 'permission to register' (*licentia allegandi*) formula that appears in all donations. That this same formula appears in sales after 540 suggests, of course, Ravenna's enthusiasm for registration, which Tjäder noted.<sup>293</sup> The political uncertainty of the times, or the fact that the donation included the condition that Maria and her husband be buried inside the church of S. Lorenzo, may both have played a role. Either way, registration for Maria was a cultural imperative, not a legal one, just as it was not legally required for sales in Justinianic law.<sup>294</sup>

### 3.4 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to analyze the different modes of transfer that we can derive from the Ravenna Papyri. Our first mode of transfer was inheritance. *P. Ital.* 4-5, 6 and 7 force us to believe that the system of partible inheritance was still the norm in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries AD. In that respect nothing much has changed since the centuries before. The terminology that is used in the documents, however, did change, and it changed almost completely. Some roles were taken over, such as the position of the emperor by the Church, a quite considerable change in itself. But the tone of soberness and abstemiousness that comes forth from the documents differs considerably from earlier evidence. One specific aspect of inheritance practices that has changed continuously over the centuries is the position of women. From the Ravenna Papyri we can infer a considerable social-economic status of women. This is not only based on the quantity of indications, but also the quality: Their position in decision-making insinuates a quite strong female stand.

The second mode concerned transactions through bills of exchange, interchanging pieces of property for coin. Each of these consensual-contracts are littered with so-called terms and conditions: The authenticity of the money exchanges was verified, each party had to restate their intentions and willingness to cooperate, and the property was often checked by a 'neutral' delegacy, or by the buyer itself. In some cases, these consensual contracts were reassessed,

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<sup>293</sup> Tjäder (1982) 26-27 (for the receiver's benefit, not for the state); on changes in the formula c. 600, see N. Everett (2000) 75.

<sup>294</sup> Three sales were registered: *P. Ital.* 29 for only 18 *solidi* (the land in question bordered that of the Ravennate Church, 'situm territorio Ravennati inter adfines fundum Pictulisiuris ecclesiae catholicae Ravennatis', perhaps this explains why it was registered); *P. Ital.* 31 for 40 *solidi* (Montanus *vir clarissimus* purchases land in Faenza from a local layman, Domnicus); *P. Ital.* 33, for 20 *solidi*.

because one of the parties neglected its duties, as was the case with Waduulfus and Riccifrida<sup>295</sup> Interestingly enough, most of these contracts originate from the same period in time, and solely concern Goths. It indicates that most Goths desired a reassurance of the rights to their property; most likely due to Justinian's politics in the sixth century.

The third mode of transfer was through donation, or gifting, between individual Goths, Romans and the Church. Most donations in the Ravenna Papyri stem from wealthy individuals, with only some exceptions. Still, evidence from other contemporaneous papyri suggest that poor or common people gifted as well, probably as much, and perhaps even more in terms of proportion. The fact that everyone donated, regardless of his or her background, indicates that there must have been some form of social pressure to donate. And, because the donations went almost exclusively to the Church, it was internalized pressure.<sup>296</sup>

A clear aspect of continuity in these papyri is the description of property, which is typically rather extensive, though there are some exceptions. There are also signs of discontinuity: Where first a great variety of gifts was given to the Church, consisting not only of landed goods but moveable objects as well, after some time solely landed property was transferred.<sup>297</sup> Surprisingly, at times the donator indicates why he/she had donated. These reasons remain fairly predictable, however, and state the obvious: People donated for the benefit of their soul. They are, however, different from former Roman acts of evergetism and civic benefaction.

That so many of the Ravennate papyri seem to record the owner's aim to reinstate their possessions (*P. Ital.* 7, 12, 30 and 33) says, in my opinion, more about their good conservation than about the amount of production. If Goths and Romans just recorded transactions in times of peril it is proof that such practices were quite common and considered secure enough. But, we should remind ourselves that the chronological and regional arc of these papyri is narrow. It makes sense, of course, that the Ravennate Church would try to preserve documents for ex-Gothic property, especially since it was the direct recipient of Justinian's Byzantine seizure of Gothic lands between 557 AD and 565 AD.<sup>298</sup> In any case, it seems that Ravennati certainly valued documents, and perhaps the traditions which produced them, as is clear from the almost exclusive use of public scribes to record each mode of transfer (*tabelliones/forenses*).

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<sup>295</sup> *P. Ital.* 43.

<sup>296</sup> For more commentary on internalized social pressure by the Church, see: R. Klein (2008) 81-122.

<sup>297</sup> It is quite clearly in line with the early medieval gift-economy of monastic institutions, which would however make a transition from a '...gift economy to profit economy...without worry or reflection.' See: L. K. Little (1978) 68.

<sup>298</sup> Tjäder (1955) 17-27.

Following, these scribes always qualified themselves as ‘from the city of Ravenna’ and maintained a ‘college of scribes’ (or *schola forensium*).<sup>299</sup>

All the same, we should ask ourselves if we are really dealing with a land market. As noted in the introduction, there are a couple of standards that an economic structure has to meet before it can rightfully be donned a market. Certainly, the Ravenna Papyri display a large number of buyers and sellers, with different kinds of backgrounds. They are protected by legal precedents as well. It is difficult to know how ‘rational’ this market was, because the papyri do not display such particular remarks; though it is not characteristic for these papyri to tell such anyway. Products of exchange seem to have been fairly comparable, with *solidi* being the accepted currency to secure trade.

We cannot be completely sure if externalities influenced most of our buyers and sellers, though political intimidation could certainly have influenced transactions. Earlier, we analyzed *P. Ital. 12* which treats the testament of the Gothic widow Gundihild. Apparently, she appointed a guardian for her sons out of defense: Three Gothic soldiers, Aduid, Rosemud and Gundirit, threatened to take over what had been rightfully hers. As it happens, a similar case survives from 557 AD (not in *gesta* format): The Goth Gundila tried to regain property in Nepi (near Viterbo, north of Rome), lost in the war with Byzantine forces in the 530s, by converting to Catholicism. Pope Vigilius and a Gothic bishop intervened and ordered that Gundila’s property be restored to him, but the Gothic resurgence under Totila (± 540-550 AD) meant Gundila lost it again to a Gothic count, who gave it to his sons.<sup>300</sup> From legal and administrative sources one could conclude that these ‘illegal transfers’ were quite common. For example, one of the main problems conferred in the *Variae* is that of Romans and Goths forcefully taking over each other’s property. And, such concerns also appear in the *Edictum Theodorici*.<sup>301</sup> Yet, as several scholars have shown, it is impossible to conclude that the Gothic Wars, the Lombard invasions, and famine for that matter, have influenced the social-economic landscape of Italy in its entirety.<sup>302</sup> Thus, *P. Ital. 12* and *49* add to the image of an economy hampered by war and other disasters; yet this image should be taken with a grain of salt.

In any case, the market that existed was certainly not perfect, though we should not have expected so. One of the more interesting questions to ask now is how extensive and ‘healthy’

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<sup>299</sup> *P. Ital. 24*: ‘...primicerius schola forensium civitatis Ravennae seo Classis...’; see also Everett (2000) 57-59.

<sup>300</sup> *P. Ital. 49*; for dates and reconstruction of these events: P. Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy*, 489-554 (Cambridge 1997) 321-325, 382-383.

<sup>301</sup> Cass. *Variae*, 3.20, 5.29-30, 3.52, 8.28.3; *ET* 10, 45, 76; there are two sides to this debate, with W. Goffart stating that these forceful takeovers were not common at all, and M. Innes stating the opposite. See: Goffart (1980) 97; Innes (2006) 39-74.

<sup>302</sup> Grey (2016) 295.

this market was. From the Ravenna Papyri we possess twelve bills of exchange, and sixteen donations that relocate ownership of property into the hands of the Church. Not even counting in the property transfers by testament or will, it seems as if the accumulation of property towards the Church could have influenced the overall land market, maybe even obstructing it. Of course, we cannot be sure how this accumulation into one central institution transformed the market, but it should be researched further if we want to make any statements or assumptions on the durability of this market, or its complexity. Such we cannot do, unfortunately, solely from the Ravenna Papyri.



# 4

## Conclusion

**M**any points have been made in the previous chapters, all necessary to make in order to answer the question that have been asked in the beginning: What kind of landowning system do we see in the Ravenna Papyri, in social-economic respect? We will answer this question by summarizing the points that have been made and reconsidering them.

The first chapter focused almost primarily on economic variables and organizational aspects, that is how the pieces of property are arranged in our source. The Ravenna Papyri lists several kinds of landholdings, from small farms to large estates, yet all are organized within the same system of *fundi* and *massae*. These *fundi* could be part of a *massa*, which was most likely some kind of central building, or at least an ancient concept that aimed to centralize several holdings. This organization was, perhaps, badly needed, for most of the landholdings were dispersed and fragmented. In any case, the system seems to have been quite advanced, for its use in the Ravenna Papyri results in quite precise numerations of wealth. Size, however, is a more difficult matter in this regard, as the papyri only list the size of property that is transferred, not its total. There is some kind of regional demarcation to be made, with small dispersed landholdings dominating the north, and larger estates in the south. We should take this denouement with a grain of salt, however, for there is no evidence which can indefinitely confirm it. And, certainly, the fact that larger estates seem to have existed around Rome for quite some time, indicates that the agricultural landscape was not that strictly divided. To make it simple: That we do not see large estates as much as smaller holdings is no reason to believe that the Italian landscape was dominated completely and only by smaller holdings. One thing seems to be very clear, nonetheless: There is no evidence that landowners in the Ravenna Papyri possessed landholdings outside of Italy and the islands surrounding it, and it quite likely that most of them did in fact not do so. There is a good chance that this was the result of the ‘barbarian invasion’, which could have cut off most of the original economic supply lines, leaving former Roman possessions on its own. Presumably they fell prey to rapacious neighbors, or to eager landowners who had worked or controlled the lands in commission of its original owners.

The second chapter focused on the social aspects of the Ravenna Papyri, dealing primarily with the social status and background of the people in these documents. Logically, we have only dealt with people who owned, leased or worked on landholdings. Some ‘classes’ were easier to derive from our papyri than others. For example, there is almost nothing to find about the peasant-proprietor in these papyri, apart from the occasional mention. What we do know however, and this is more a generalization than very specific, is that the position of these peasant proprietors seems to have been fairly high: They were not *coloni* in the sense of tied serfs, they could sue their landlord, and they were the instigator behind several papyri. We should take such conclusions always with a grain of salt, of course, since the position of these peasants was still by no means perfect. They still had to deal with famine, floods and political backlash (the Gothic, Byzantine and Lombard invasions), and they still fell victim to rapacious landlords. We have obtained more evidence about the medium landowner, a social position which could lead up into the ranks of the aristocracy. The Ravenna Papyri lists a considerable group of these landowners, who are characterized by the fact that they not only earned the natural riches from their holdings, but also possessed second occupations: Some tailors, bankers, and shipmasters, to name a few professions, owned land as well. The Ravenna Papyri indicate that their number must have stayed stable, but other sources show that their number dwindled towards the seventh century. It is wholly possible that economic regression, and wars, had obstructed most tradesmen in the ability to trade, eventually leading to their demise for some considerable time. Most landed wealth ended up into the hands of the military- and bureaucratic landowner (and the Church, but we will come back to this institution later). As officials, they were able to use the wealth acquired through holding office to buy up pieces of land. Bureaucratic landowners had already existed for a while, before the fifth century, but the rise in importance of military landowners suggests some kind of considerable militarization of society. Perhaps, the wars and other political disturbances that had plagued Italy in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries had resulted in the wide call for military protection, giving complete access to government (and therefore wealth) to these individuals. The sources do, in any case, indicate so. A more precarious debate surrounds the existence of agricultural slaves, which do not appear in the Ravenna Papyri in abundance. Rather, only a few are attested, and when they are attested it is not clear if they were used as laborers on plots of land. Other sources do indicate that they were used as agricultural laborers, but sometimes it is not clear if they involve slaves or tied tenants. It would be logical, however, if slaves were not used as agricultural laborers: There were, probably, enough of them, but they were too highly valued in these times of economic regression to be used on land. When we see slaves in the Ravenna Papyri, then, they

might have been house slaves, not agricultural ones. Interestingly, *P. Ital. 3* showed that landowners had different options to cultivate their lands when slaves were too valuable to be used. As the papyri show, they could hire tenants, for a couple of days per week, to work on their property.

The third chapter analyzed three different modes of transfer that we discovered in the Ravenna Papyri: Through inheritance, by buying or selling, and through donations. When it comes to inheritance, not much seems to have changed since the centuries before, at least in practice. Partible inheritance, which seems to be the only system of inheritance in our papyri, was still the norm. But, the terminology used in these wills and testaments did change, and it changed almost completely. Where testaments were first filled with emotion, a last chance to display the real character of the dead, they now had become sober wills which concentrated almost exclusively on the transaction, and nothing else. Sure, sometimes the documents conveyed wishes of the deceased to set slaves free, but that was it. Women were, almost assuredly, also recipients of these testaments, but we have to conclude this from the overall position of women in the Ravenna Papyri. Their social position seems to have been stable: Women were able to decide whether they wanted to donate, buy or sell a piece of property or not. Some papyri convey the idea that women needed the permission of their husband to do so, but this seems to have been an issue in the lower classes, not the top. Furthermore, the wills are a testament to the enormous accumulation of property into the hands of the Church. The documents no longer designate the emperor as a standard recipient of property, but list the Church, with no exception, instead. Locally, and regionally, the 'receiving role' of the emperor had deteriorated, and, presumably, this position was gradually taken over by the Church. It is likely that this deterioration went hand in hand with an overall diminishing influence of the emperor, and a Church that took over that same political (and ecclesiastical) power more and more.

The second mode of transaction concerned the bills of exchange, consensual contracts by which individuals bought or sold small and large pieces of land. The system that controlled these transactions was highly developed, using specific and standardized checks and balances to ensure a legal transfer. In some cases, such consensual contracts were broken, but even in those situations the legal precedent guaranteed a legal and just outcome; though this system must have been less helpful when one of the parties enjoyed considerable judicial power. Interestingly, most of the contracts originate more or less from the same period, and almost exclusively list Goths. It indicates that a great majority of Goths needed a reassurance of the

rights over their property (or properties), presumably a side-effect of the Gothic Wars and Justinian's confiscation politics.

The third mode of transfer was through donations, another way through which the Church accumulated massive amounts of landed wealth. Most of the donations in the Ravenna Papyri concern wealthy individuals, yet there are enough indications to believe that the rest of society donated as well, as much, and perhaps even more. The amount of donations indicates some kind of internalized social pressure, which must have influenced the quantity and cycle of donations considerably. The reason behind such donations often remain ambiguous. And, even when it is articulated, the logic is quite self-evident: To benefit the soul. What the proportion of donations in the Ravenna Papyri do suggest, assuredly, is that the land market where it existed was indefinitely dominated and overshadowed by the accumulation of land by the Church. What the exact ratio was, we do not know, unfortunately. Yet, because the Church was one of the biggest participants the land market, as an institution it must have influenced the price and availability of landed property. Anyway, the market was not perfect, and we should not expect it to be so: War, famine, floods and political persuasion were all part of the game, and, surely, it took a while before any of these variables had negligible influence. And, indeed, the fact that we even possess so many papyri that indicate the presence of a market, is a testament in itself to the existence of it.

What changed since the fall of the Roman Empire, and what did not? Certainly, the terminology seems to have been unchanged, an indication for the re-use of Roman culture, as indicated in the introduction. Pieces of lands were still called *fundi* and *massae*; if people bought them, they did with *solidi*; those who were hired to work on the property, were still called *coloni*, and if you had enough money, you might be able to use *servi*; landowners are often indicated as *possessores*, and merchants as *negotiatores*; rents were, sometimes, collected by *allectori*, from *iugera*; and if a sale was concluded, or not, one spoke of *actio venditi*, or *actio empti*. The point is, on the surface not much had changed.

Yet, although the terminology did not change, other things did. Newcomers had transposed the political landscape. It was no longer the city council or the senatorial order that dominated, but those Goths and Romans who had invested in a bureaucratic office, or a military position. And, the old aristocracy who had inhabited the large estates for centuries are almost no were to be seen in the sources; yet there is an abundance of Gothic soldiers who owns large estates. Sure, some of the older aristocracies must have adapted, and survived, but it is quite clear from the sources that a new group of individuals had taken over most of the aristocracies' former position. This change of power, despite how complete and effective it must have been,

did not manifest itself in every layer of society, however. Medium owners, such as merchants and artisans, had existed before, and presumably owned as much land as they had done in former times. Peasants, even though there is not a lot of evidence for them in the Ravenna Papyri, lived in just as harsh conditions as they had done before: They dealt with floods, famine and war, and fought for their livelihood.

Doc. Nr.	Type of document:	Year document:	Area (region, city or town):	Name owner :	Name lessee(s):	Name seller (in case of transaction):	Fundus name:	Massa name:	Percentage of whole:	Value price:	Value rent:	Adjacent property ( <i>ad fines</i> ):
P. Ital. 1	Letter on estate management	Sept. 445-Sept. 446	Sicily	-	Tranquillus	-	Partilaticus	-	-	-	-	-
P. Ital. 1	Letter on estate management	Sept. 445-Sept. 446	Sicily	-	Zosimus, Cuprio	-	-	Enporitana	-	-	756 gold solidi	-
P. Ital. 1	Letter on estate management	Sept. 445-Sept. 446	(Eastern) Sicily	-	Zosimus, Cuprio	-	Anniana or Myrtus	-	-	-	147+75 gold solidi	-
P. Ital. 1	Letter on estate management	Sept. 445-Sept. 446	Sicily	-	Zosimus, Cuprio	-	Apera	-	-	-	52 gold solidi	-
P. Ital. 1	Letter on estate management	Sept. 445-Sept. 446	Sicily	-	Sisinnius	-	Callius	-	-	-	200 gold solidi	-
P. Ital. 1	Letter on estate management	Sept. 445-Sept. 446	Sicily	-	Sisinnius	-	-	Fadilianensis	-	-	445 gold solidi	-
P. Ital. 1	Letter on estate management	Sept. 445-Sept. 446	Sicily	-	Eleutherio, Zosimus, Eubodus	-	-	Cassitana	-	-	500 gold solidi	-
P. Ital. 8	Docket	17 July 564	Ravenna	Gratianus	-	Gunderit	Savilianus	-	2/12	-	-	-
P. Ital. 8	Docket	17 July 564	Bologna	Gratianus	-	-	Petronianus	-	2/12	-	-	-
P. Ital. 8	Docket	17 July 564	Bologna	Gratianus	-	Afrio	Verutianus	-	1/12	-	-	-
P. Ital. 8	Docket	17 July 564	Bologna	Gaudentius	-	Bonosa	Verutianus	-	0,5/12	-	-	-
P. Ital. 8	Docket	17 July 564	-	Gratianus	-	-	Urbicius (?)	-	-	-	-	-

## Appendix 1

P. Ital. 8	Docket	17 July 564	-	Gratianus	-	-	Staturianus	-	-			
P. Ital. 8	Docket	17 July 564	Ponticello/ Lupatis	Gratianus	-	Bishop Messor	-	-	4/12	-	-	-
P. Ital. 30	Bill of sale	539	Faenza, in the town of Painitis	Pelegrinus	-	Thulgilo, Domnica, Deutherius	Concordiacus	-	20 iugera	-	110 gold solidi	Casa Nova, Fundus Salecto, Fundus Kalegaricus, nameless property.
P. Ital. 31	Bill of sale	January 540	Faenza	Montanus	-	Domnicus	Domicilius	-	+ 3,5 iugera	+ 20 gold solidi	-	-
P. Ital. 31	Bill of sale	January 540	Faenza	Montanus	-	Domnicus	Centum Viginti quinque	-	+ 3,5 iugera	+ 20 gold solidi	-	-
P. Ital. 32	Bill of sale	21 March 540	Faenza	Laurentius	-	Milanius and Gerontius	Roborata (Rovorata)	-	1,5/12	5 1/3 gold solidi	-	-
P. Ital. 33	Bill of sale	July 541	Rimini	Isacius	-	Minnulus	Domitianus	-	2/12	20 gold solidi	-	-
P. Ital. 34	Bill of sale	535	Ravenna	Petrus	-	Church S. Anastasia	-	-	8/12	120 gold solidi	-	-
P. Ital. 34	Bill of sale	551	Ravenna	Petrus	-	Church S. Anastasia	-	-	4/12	60 gold solidi	-	-
P. Ital. 35	Bill of sale	3 June 572	Rimini	Deusdedit	-	Domninus	Custinis	-	5/12	> 5 gold solidi	-	Fundus Varianus, fundus Titzianus,

												fundus Quadrantula.
P. Ital. 35	Bill of sale	3 June 572	Rimini	Deusdedit	-	Dominus	Casale Basianum	-	2/12	> 5 gold solidi	-	Fundus Varianus, fundus Titzianus, fundus Quadrantula.
P. Ital. 36	Bill of sale	575-591	Rimini	Hildigernus	-	Deusdedit	Genicianus	-	6/12	24 gold solidi	-	Three unnamed fundi.
P. Ital. 37	Bill of sale	10 March 591	Rimini	Iohannis	-	Rusticiana, Tzitta	Genicianus	-	6/12	24 gold solidi	-	Three unnamed fundi.
P. Ital. 38-41	Bill of sale	616-619	Ravenna	A man.	-	Theodorus	-	-	6/12	-	-	-
Docu ment:	Type of document:	Year document:	Area (region, city or town):	Name owner:	Name lessee(s):	Name seller (in case of transaction):	Fundus name:	Massa name:	Part/percent age of whole:	Value price:	Value rent:	Adjacent properties (adfinis):
P. Ital. 42	Bill of sale	c. 600	-	A man.	-	A man.	-	-	-	10 gold solidi and 2 tremises	-	-
P. Ital. 43	Certificate of entitlements	542 (?)	Ravenna	Leo	-	Waduulfus, Riccifrida	Raunis	-	1 2/3 + 1/12	130 gold solidi	-	-
P. Ital. 46	Bill of sale	c. 600	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30 gold solidi	-	-

## Appendix 1



Papyri and location:	Name person (or indication):	Title given to person:	Background:	Relation to land:	Profession of person:
P. Ital. 1	Lauricius.	<i>Maior cubiculi, praepositus sacri cubiculi.</i>	Roman.	Has a <i>patrimonium</i> .	Has been high ceremonial master, is now 'retired' ( <i>missicius</i> ).
P. Ital. 1	Pyrrus.	-	Roman.	Oversees incomes <i>patrimoniums</i> .	Tribune.
P. Ital. 1	Sisinnius.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Tenant of <i>patrimonium</i> Lauricius.
P. Ital. 1	Eleutherio.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Tenant of <i>patrimonium</i> Lauricius.
P. Ital. 1	Zosimus.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Tenant of <i>patrimonium</i> Lauricius.
P. Ital. 1	Tranquillus.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Tenant of <i>patrimonium</i> Lauricius.
P. Ital. 1	Gregorius.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Tenant of <i>patrimonium</i> Lauricius.
P. Ital. 1	Cuprio.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Tenant of <i>patrimonium</i> Lauricius.
P. Ital. 1	Eubudus.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Tenant of <i>patrimonium</i> Lauricius.
P. Ital. 2	Titianus.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Tenant of <i>patrimonium</i> Lauricius.

## Appendix 2

P. Ital. 2	Johannes.	-	Roman.	Probably owns some land, and collects rent.	Collector for the Church of Ravenna. <i>Allector</i> (?)
P. Ital. 2	Agnellus.	-	Roman.	Oversees rent collections, owns land.	Bishop of the Church of Ravenna.
P. Ital. 3	Maximus.	-	Roman.	Bailiff of Saltus Erudianus.	Bailiff.
P. Ital. 3	Proiectus.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Farmer
P. Ital. 3	Valerius.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Farmer
P. Ital. 3	Reparatus.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Farmer
P. Ital. 3	Justinus	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Farmer
P. Ital. 3	Quintulus	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Farmer
P. Ital. 3	Sabinio	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Farmer
P. Ital. 3	Leo.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Farmer
P. Ital. 3	Achilles.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Farmer
P. Ital. 3	Victurunis.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Farmer
P. Ital. 3	Severus.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Farmer
P. Ital. 3	Viktor.	-	Roman.	Tenant/leaseholder.	Farmer (Bauer) and priest ( <i>Ecclesiastes</i> ).
P. Ital. 3	Johannes.	-	Roman.	Probably owns some land, and collects rent.	<i>Allector</i>
P. Ital. 3	Vigilius.	-	Roman.	Probably owns some land, and collects rent.	<i>Allector</i>

P. Ital. 3	Bassus.	-	Roman.	Probably owns some land, and collects rent.	<i>Allector</i>
P. Ital. 4-5 A-B	Georgius	<i>Vir devotus</i>	Roman	Owner landholding(s).	Silk manufacturer ( <i>Olosiricoprata civitates Ravennatis</i> ).
P. Ital. 4-5 A-B	Several people (slaves), without name.	-	Not certain.	Slaves who work on the landholdings.	Slave.
P. Ital. 6	Manna	<i>Vir devotus</i>	Goth	Owner landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 6	Nanderit	-	Goth	Owner landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 6	Albanio	-	-	Slave who works on the landholdings.	Slave, but after Manna dies a freedmen.
P. Ital. 6	Spouse Albanio	-	-	Slave who works on the landholdings.	Slave, but after Manna dies a freedmen.
P. Ital. 6	Daughter Albanio	-	-	Slave who works on the landholdings.	Slave, but after Manna dies a freedmen.
P. Ital. 7	Gundihild	<i>Vir illustrius</i>	Goth	Owner landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 7	Gudahals	<i>Vir illustrius</i>	Goth	Deceased owner of landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 7	Lendarit	-	Goth	'Future' owner of landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 7	Landarit	-	Goth	'Future' owner of landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 8	Germana	<i>Clarissima femina</i>	Goth	Owner landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 8	Collictus	Probably <i>Vir clarissimus</i>	Goth	Owner landholding(s).	-

P. Ital. 8	Gratianus	<i>Vir reverendus</i>	Roman	Owner landholding(s)	Guardian of Stefanus ( <i>Defensori</i> ).
P. Ital. 8	Stefanus	<i>Honestus puer</i>	Roman	Owner landholding(s)	-
P. Ital. 8	Guderit	-	Goth	Worked on landholding Collictus.	Freedman.
P. Ital. 8	Ranihilda	-	Goth	Slave who works on the landholdings.	Slave.
P. Ital. 9	-	-	Goth	Owner landholding(s)	Probably soldier, or another military occupation.
P. Ital. 9	Several people (slaves), without name.	-	-	Slaves who work on the landholdings.	Slave.
P. Ital. 10-11	Pierius	<i>Vir inlustris</i>	Roman	Owner landholding(s)	Count under King Odoacer ( <i>Comes</i> ).
P. Ital. 12	Maria	<i>Femina spectabilis</i>	Roman	Owner landholding(s)	-
P. Ital. 13	Ranilo	<i>Sublimis femina</i>	Goth	Owner landholding(s)	Probably former soldier in Gothic army.
P. Ital. 13	Felithanc	<i>Vir sublimis</i>	Goth	Owner landholding(s)	Housewife.
P. Ital. 13	Ademunt (or Andreas)	-	Goth	Owner landholding(s)	-
P. Ital. 13	Aderit	<i>Vir gloriosus</i>	Goth		Probably former soldier in Gothic army.
P. Ital. 13	Several people (slaves), without name.	-	Probably Goths?	Slaves who work on the landholdings.	Slave.

P. 14-15	Bonus	<i>Vir honestus</i>	Goth	Owner landholding(s)	Tights manufacturer ( <i>Bracarius</i> ).
P. 14-15	Martyria	<i>Femina honesta</i>	Goth	Owner landholding(s)	Tights manufacturer ( <i>Bracarius</i> ).
P. 14-15	Several people (slaves), without name.	-	Probably Goths?	Slaves who work on the landholdings.	Slave.
P. 16	Johannes	-	Roman.	Probably owns some land.	A weapons carrier of his lord Georgius ( <i>spatario quondam Georgii magistro militum</i> ), and leader of the 'Theodosian Numerus' ( <i>primicerii numerii felicium Theodosiacus</i> ).
P. Ital. 17	Megistus	-	Roman.	Owner landholding(s).	Private secretary of the emperor ( <i>Megisti imperialis a secretis</i> ).
P. Ital. 17	Flavia Xantippe	<i>Femina gloriosissima</i>	Roman.	Owner landholding(s).	Daughter, no other occupation given.
P. Ital. 17	Several people (slaves), without name.	-	-	Slaves who work on the landholdings.	Slave.
P. Ital. 18-19	Stefanus	<i>Vir illustrius and magnificus</i>	Greek	Owner landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 20	Sisivera	<i>Honesta femina</i>	Goth	Owner landholding (s).	Was slave, now freedman.

P. Ital. 20	Theudifara	-	Goth	Owner landholding(s).	Former mistress of Sisivera.
P. Ital. 21	Deusdedit	<i>Vir reverendus</i>	Roman	Owner landholding(s).	Sub-deacon.
P. Ital. 21	Melissa	-	Roman	Owner landholding(s).	Housewife.
P. Ital. 21	Secundus	-	-	Slave who works on the land and in the house of Deusdedit.	Slave.
P. Ital. 21	Several people (slaves), without name.	-	-	Slaves who work on the landholdings.	Slave.
P. Ital. 22	Paulacis	<i>Vir devotus</i>	Roman	Owner landholding(s).	Soldier of the numerus of Rimini, Armenian unit ( <i>Paulacine viro devoto, milite numeri Arminiorum</i> ).
P. Ital. 22	Stefanus	-	Roman	Owner landholding(s).	Commander of the numerus of the Veronese ( <i>Stefani primicerii numeri Veronensium</i> ).
P. Ital. 23	Johannes	<i>Vir clarissimus</i>	Roman	Owner landholding(s).	Commander of the Numerus of Ravenna ( <i>Prim. Num. Rav.</i> )
P. Ital. 23	Stefania	Not given, but probably <i>Honesta femina</i> .	Roman	Owner landholding(s).	Housewife.

P. Ital. 23	Johannia	-	Roman	Owner landholding(s), but in name of the monastery of San Giovanni Battista 'ad Navicula'.	Abbot of the monastery San Giovanni Battista 'ad Navicula'.
P. Ital. 24	Gaudosius	<i>Vir reverentissimus</i>	Roman	Probably landowner (is able to gift a garden to the Church of Ravenna).	Guardian ( <i>Defensori</i> ) of the Church of Ravenna.
P. Ital. 25	Octavianus	-	Roman.	Probably landowner, but in name of the Church of Ravenna.	Preacher of the Church of Ravenna.
P. Ital. 25	Martinus	<i>Vir honestus</i>	Roman.	Probably owner of landholding(s).	Merchant.
P. Ital. 25	Aurelia	<i>Vir femina</i>	Roman.	Probably owner of landholding(s).	Perhaps housewife, not quite clear.
P. Ital. 27	No name given, female.	-	Goth (Does not sign with usual Roman name or sign, but with <i>Chirocrista</i> . This means that the person is illiterate, c.q. cannot write Latin. Most obvious would be a Gothic ethnicity, then).	Probably owner of landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 28	Wiliwa	<i>Clarissima femina</i>	Goth	Owner of landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 29	Flavius Basilius	<i>Vir honestus</i>	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Banker
P. Ital. 29	Rusticus	<i>Vir reverendus</i>	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Churchwarden
P. Ital. 29	Cassianus	<i>Vir laudabilis</i>	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	-

P. Ital. 30	Thulgilo	<i>Honesta Femina</i>	Goth	Owner of landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 30	Domnica	<i>Honesta Femina</i>	Goth	Owner of landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 30	Deutherius	<i>Vir honestus</i>	Goth	Owner of landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 30	Pelegrinus	<i>Vir strenuus</i>	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 30	Secundus	-	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Rower on a 'fast boat' ( <i>dromonarii</i> ).
P. Ital. 30	Witterit	<i>Vir devotus</i>	Goth	Owner of landholding(s).	Shield bearer.
P. Ital. 30	Andreas	-	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Rower on a 'fast boat' ( <i>dromonarii</i> ).
P. Ital. 31	Domnicus	<i>Vir honestus</i>	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 31	Montanus	<i>Vir clarissimus</i>	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Notary of the royal cloakroom ( <i>notario sacri vestearii domini nostri</i> ).
P. Ital. 32	Milanius	<i>Vir honestus</i>	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Only occupation noticeable is citizenship.
P. Ital. 32	Gerontius	<i>Vir honestus</i>	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Only occupation noticeable is citizenship.
P. Ital. 32	Laurentius	<i>Vir strenuus</i>	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Part of the community's officials. Also seen in Cassiodorus <i>Variae</i> 4.18, 8.15, 12.13, 12.23, 12.24. In the



					<i>Variae</i> Laurentius has many more important titles, such as <i>vir exceptionalibus</i> , but these are not given in <i>P. Ital. 32</i> . The dating, however, is the same: Both documents are from the middle of the fifth century).
P. Ital. 33	Isacius	Vir honestus	Jew	Owner of landholding(s).	Soap fabricant.
P. Ital. 33	Minnulus	Vir reverendus	Goth	Owner of landholding(s), in name of the Church of Ravenna.	<i>Clericus/Lector</i> of the Church of Ravenna.
P. Ital. 34	<i>Clerus</i> of the Church of Ravenna (probably Minnulus, as P. Ital. 33 is from 541, and P. Ital. 34 is from 551).	Vir reverendus	Probably Goth (if Minnulus).	Owner of landholding(s), in name of the Church of Ravenna.	<i>Clericus/Lector</i> of the Church of Ravenna.
P. Ital. 34	Petrus	Vir reverendus	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Guardian ( <i>Defensori</i> ) of the Church of Ravenna.
P. Ital. 35	Domninus	Vir honestus	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Farmer ( <i>agellario</i> ).
P. Ital. 35	Deusededit	Vir clarissimus	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Functionary at the court of the Holy Donation Fund ( <i>palatino sacrarum argitionum</i> ).

P. Ital. 36	Deusededit	Vir honestus	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Probably the same Deusededit from <i>P. Ital.</i> 35 (can be placed in the same period, which is 575-591), hence the profession could still be functionary at the court of the Holy Donation Fund ( <i>palatino sacrarum argitionum</i> ).
P. Ital. 36	Hildigernus	Vir clarissimus	Goth	Owner of landholding(s).	Could be a military official? Not clear.
P. Ital. 37	Rusticiana	Honesta femina	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 37	Felix	-	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Guardian of the Church of Ravenna ( <i>Defensori</i> ).
P. Ital. 37	Tzitta	Vir devotus	Goth	Owner of landholding(s).	Soldier of the Numerus of the <i>Persoarmiyorum</i> (Ravenna).
P. Ital. 37	Iohannis	Vir clarissimus	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Soldier, probably higher in rank than Tzitta, but also at a Numerus; perhaps part of the same <i>Persoarmiyorum</i> .
P. Ital. 38-41 A-D	Theodorus	-	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Banker.

P. Ital. 43	Waduulfus	Vir devotus	Goth	Owner of landholding(s).	Farmer.
P. Ital. 43	Riccifrida	Honesta femina	Goth	Owner of landholding(s).	Farmer.
P. Ital. 43	Leo	Vir honestus	Goth	Owner of landholding(s).	Ship owner (of probably several ships).
P. Ital. 44	Maurus (?)	-	Roman	Owner of landholding(s) in name of the Church of Ravenna.	Bishop of the Church of Ravenna.
P. Ital. 44	Theodorus Calliopa	-	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Exarch or Praefect of Ravenna ( <i>glorioso praefecturio</i> ).
P. Ital. 44	Anna	-	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	Housewife.
P. Ital. 44	Man, name not given (son of Anna and Theodorus).	-	Roman	Owner of landholding(s).	-
P. Ital. 49	Gundila (or Gudila).	-	Goth	Owner of landholding(s).	-

## Appendix 2

### Appendix 3

<b>P. Ital.</b>	<b>Year (AD)</b>	<b>Buyer/ client</b>	<b>Seller/ gifter/ taker</b>	<b>Type (s) of exchange</b>
4-5 A-B	552-75	The Church of Ravenna	Office of the praetorian praefect	Testament
6	575	The Church of Ravenna	Manna, Sohn of Nanderit	Testament
7	557	First, <i>vir honestus</i> Liberatus. When sons come of age: Lendarit and landarit.	Gundihild.	Appointment of a Guardian (Vormundsbestellung) and Testament
8	564	Germana	Gratianus, Guardian of Stefanus	Receipt (inheritance given to Guardian), or “Quittung”.
9	±550	Loser of the legal battle (no name given).	Winner of the legal battle (no name given).	Debt
10-11 A-B	489	Pierrius	Odoaker (king).	Gift
12	491	The Church of Ravenna	Maria	Gift
13	553	The Church of Ravenna	Ranilo	Gift
14-15 A-B	572	The Church of Ravenna	Bonus and his wife Martyria	Gift
16	±600	The Church of Ravenna	Johannes (or Iohannis)	Gift
17	±600	The Church of Ravenna	Flavia Xantippe	Gift
18-19 A-B	±600	The Church of Ravenna	Stefanus	Gift
20	690-692	The Church of Ravenna	Sisivera	Gift
21	625	The Church of Ravenna	Deusdedit	Gift
22	639	The Church of Ravenna	Paulacis	Gift
23	±700	Cloister of San Giovannia Battista ‘ad Navicula’.	Johannes	Gift
24	±650	The Church of Ravenna	Gaudiosus	Gift
25	±600-650	Martinus and Aurelia	Octavianus (in name of Faventinian Church).	Gift

26	±550	-	-	Gift
27	±550	Church of Ravenna.	Illiterate person, presumably of Gothic origin.	Gift
28	613-641	Church of Ravenna, presumably.	Wiliwiwa	Gift
29	504	Rusticus	Flavius Basilius	Contract of purchase ( <i>epistulae traditionis</i> ).
30	539	Pelegrinus	Thulgilo and her daughter Domnica	Contract of purchase
31	540	Montanus	Domnicus	Contract of purchase and transfer letter.
32	540	Laurentius	Milanius and Gerontius	Transfer letter (after purchase?).
33	541	Isacius	Minnulus (of the Gothic Church of Ravenna).	Contract of purchase ( <i>traditio corporalis</i> ).
34	551	Petrus	Clergy of the Church of Ravenna (probably Minnulus, as <i>P. Ital. 33</i> is from 541, and <i>P. Ital. 34</i> is from 551).	Contract of purchase
35	572	Deusdedit	Domninus	Contract of purchase
36	575-591	Hildigernus	Deusdedit	Contract of purchase
37	591	Iohannis	Rusticiana	Contract of purchase
38-41 A-D	616-619	-	Theodorus	Contract of purchase
42	±600	A man, name not given.	A man, name not given.	Contract of purchase
43	542	Waduulfus, Riccifrida	Leo	Entitlement certificate ( <i>Spruchurkunde</i> ).
44	642/43-665/66	Theodorus Calliopa, Anna and their son.	Maurus	Lease certificate
45	±750	-	-	Lease certificate
46	±600	-	Woman (name not given).	Contract of purchase.
49	557	Gundila	Catholic Church of Nepi	Transfer letter, entitlement certificate.

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## Primary sources

*Ancient sources that have been abbreviated:*

- Aa. Ss. Iulii. = *Acta Sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur*, ed. A. I. Meursium (Paris-Rome 1863-1870).
- CB = *Codex Traditionum Ecclesiae Ravennatis* (also *Codice Bavaro*), ed. J. B. Bernhart (Munich 1810).
- CDI = *Codice Diplomatico Istriano*, ed. P. Kandler (Trieste, n.d.)
- CDL = *Codice Diplomatico Langobardo*, I and II, ed. L. Schiaparelli (Rome 1929), III, ed. C. Brühl (Rome 1973).
- CIL = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (see: Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities; < [http://cil.bbaw.de/cil\\_en/index\\_en.html](http://cil.bbaw.de/cil_en/index_en.html) >, last consulted on 12-5-2018).
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