

THE CHURCH(ES) OF AQUILEIA, FRIULI AND ISTRIA  
AT THE TIME OF THE *RIZIANO PLACITUM*

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**ABSTRACT**

*The paper is divided into four chapters: I) Historical background; II) The church of Aquileia and its suffragans; III) The church of Grado and its suffragans; IV) King Pippin of Italy and the Frankish-Byzantine conflict.*

*The Placitum of Riziano has to be seen as part of a series of fundamental decisions in the final decade of Charlemagne's rule. These decisions concerned political and ecclesiastical structures in the northern Adriatic and also aimed at defining the spheres of interest of the Frankish and Byzantine Empires.*

*Key words: Friuli, Istria, Aquileia, Grado, church history, Franks, Slavs, Longobards, 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century*

LA CHIESA (LA CHIESE) DI AQUILEIA, IL FRIULI E L'ISTRIA ALL'EPOCA  
DEL PLACITO DI *RIZIANO*

**SINTESI**

*Il saggio è composto da quattro capitoli: I) L'ambiente storico; II) La chiesa di Aquileia e i suoi suffraganei; III) La chiesa di Grado e i suoi suffraganei; IV) Il re d'Italia Pipino e il conflitto franco-bizantino.*

*Il Placito di Riziano deve essere interpretato come parte di una serie di decisioni fondamentali prese durante l'ultima decade del regno di Carlo Magno. Tali decisioni riguardavano strutture sia politiche che ecclesiastiche della regione dell'Adriatico settentrionale, e avevano lo scopo di definire le sfere di interesse dell'Impero franco e di quello bizantino.*

*Parole chiave: Friuli, Istria, Aquileia, Grado, storia della chiesa, Franchi, Slavi, Longobardi, VIII-IX sec.*

## Historical Background

In the first decade of the ninth century the church of Aquileia, or rather the churches of Aquileia, given the dualism of the patriarchal residences Cividale and Grado, formed part of Charlemagne's Empire. These two churches were situated in the Frankish-Lombard border area adjacent to the Byzantine Empire, as were the provinces of Friuli and Istria. The person in charge of these territories was, formally since 781, King Pippin of Italy. In that year Charlemagne, "king of the Franks" (since 768) and "king of the Lombards" (since 774), had had his four-year old son Pippin not only baptised, but also anointed *rex in Italiam* or *rex Italiae* by Pope Hadrian I (cfr. Classen, 1988, 28 ff). In the year 804, when the famous *placitum* obviously took place at *Riziano* (Rižana/Risano), in the territory of Koper/Capodistria,<sup>1</sup> the political power of the 27-year old Italian king Pippin was in full array. "By command of the most pious and excellent lord, the emperor Charlemagne, and king Pippin, his son, we, their servants, were delegated to Istria, that is, the priest Izzo and the counts Cadolao and Aio ..." – thus begins the *narratio* of the famous judicial charter. The names of the two counts lead us straight into the history of Friuli at the turn of the eighth to the ninth century focussing on the upper strata of society.

The duchy of Friuli was – since 774 and particularly since 776 – in "Frankish hands". The *ducatus Foroiuliensis* was one of the most solid duchies within the *regnum Langobardorum* (Krahwinkler, 1992, 148 ff). It even continued to exist within the Carolingian Empire, up to the year 828 enlarged by huge areas in the east, which were mainly inhabited by Slavs. Friuli had an important geostrategic function during the wars against the Avars in the last decade of the eighth century so that the Frankish expansion toward the east and southeast depended to a large extent on this Friulian basis. Perhaps already in 791, at the latest, however, in the decisive years 795 and 796, the duke of Friuli was Erich, a man of Alamannian stock. The then 19-year old king Pippin gained his military reputation in the campaign of summer 796, when he commanded his troops in Pannonia. Before conquering the Avar "hring" or chief residence, he convoked a synod of bishops by the river Danube. This synod seems to have been presided by Paulinus, patriarch of Aquileia (cfr. Wolfram, 1995, 286 n. 506; Bratož, 1998, 151 ff).

Frankish and Italian troops in the 790s also got support from Istria. In 791 an anonymous *dux de Histria* fought with his warriors on the Frankish side. Maybe this anonymous duke of Istria can be identified with John (*Ioannes*), who figures so prominently in the *placitum* of Riziano. Only a few years before these military activities,

1 The onomastic identity of *Riziano* with the place-name Rižana (Risano), derived from the name of the river (*Formio* in antiquity) does not imply that the *placitum* took place in the present village of Rižana. *Riziano* would most likely have to be looked for near the mouth of the river, wherever its exact location may have been in 804.

probably in 788, the peninsula of Istria, the *provincia Histriensis*, had been incorporated into the Carolingian kingdom. In 788 the Avars had for the last time made an incursion into northeastern Italy. This move has to be seen in connection with the conflict between Duke Tassilo III of Bavaria and Charlemagne. Historians interested in Friuli and Istria should always take into consideration the political situation in Bavaria. This is particularly valid for the early and high middle ages and applies to both "secular" and "ecclesiastical" politics. For instance, in 798 Salzburg became an archbishopric – due to the importance of its diocese in the southeast of Bavaria, but thanks also to the personal friendship and close cooperation between bishop Arn and Charlemagne (Wolfram, 1995a, 170 ff). As a consequence of the Frankish victories against the Avars in the 790s the missionary activities of the church of Salzburg extended from Carantania into Pannonia.

Duke Erich of Friuli was killed in late summer 799 near the Liburnian town of Tarsatica (Rijeka/Fiume), in the course of a military campaign of "Frankish" troops in the adjacent areas claimed by Constantinople (ARF, a. 799; cfr. Katičić, 1999, 280 ff). No less a man than the patriarch of Aquileia himself, Paulinus, composed an elaborate poem on the premature death of the duke of Friuli (Krahwinkler, 1992, 154 ff). Erich's successor – whether immediate or after an interval of one or more years – was the above-mentioned Cadolah or Cadaloh, known by the title count (*comes*) from the *placitum* of Riziano. Similar to duke Erich he descended from a noble Alamannian family. Cadolah, who is mentioned as *comes* in various sources, was *dux Foroiuliensis* according to the *Annales regni Francorum*, the "official" Frankish annals. He died in July 819 in a military campaign against the Slav *dux* Ljudevit of Siscia. At that time the duke of Friuli was still the leading political functionary in the southeast of the Carolingian Empire. The duke of Friuli was therefore also a kind of "supervisor" of the province of Istria. This situation changed in 828 (Wolfram, 1995a, 247 ff).

In 799 Charlemagne granted pardon to a Lombard whom Pippin had "found" among the Avars in Pannonia three years earlier. This Lombard's name was Aio, and his roots were in Cividale. His property in Friuli and other areas of northern Italy had been confiscated – probably because he had supported duke Hrodgaud in 776. The Frankish rulers, namely Charlemagne and King Pippin, secured Aio's social restitution and made his political comeback, even promotion, possible. Of course, this was not an expression of sheer philanthropy, but a move to benefit Frankish political interests. Persons such as Aio – a very prominent example – symbolised the integration of Friulian Lombards into the Carolingian Empire (Krahwinkler, 1995, 137 ff). We can only guess, but it might not be a bad guess, that it was patriarch Paulinus who promoted the reconciliation of Aio with Pippin and Charlemagne.

### The Church of Aquileia and its Suffragans

The Franks achieved a stabilisation in the ecclesiastical sphere. They managed with some success to make both patriarchs – the metropolitan of Aquileia in Cividale and the metropolitan of Grado – serve Frankish interests. As to Aquileia, we can compare the self-confident and courageous defence of his church against Frankish intrusions by Siguald, *the humilis episcopus Aquileiae* (Krahwinkler, 1995, 83, 99), to his successor in Cividale. After Siguald's death around 786 the Franks installed a patriarch who unhesitatingly worked in their favour: the grammarian Paulinus. He was one of the leading scholars and theologians of the Carolingian Empire, friend of Alcuin of Tours and Arn of Salzburg. Paulinus obviously died on January 11<sup>th</sup> in the year 802 (Krahwinkler, 1995, 158, n. 233; Scalon, 1982, 102), about two and a half years before the *placitum* of Riziano took place. The figure of his successor, Ursus, remains rather vague. We do not know much more than his name and the alleged period of his episcopate, namely five years. This number, however, causes chronological problems, since the following patriarch of Aquileia, Maxentius, would hardly have been in office before 810, as is indicated by Charlemagne's diploma of June 14<sup>th</sup>, 811 (MGH, D. Kar. I., n. 211). Maxentius is renowned for his building activities, which were supported by Charlemagne. These activities aimed at restoring the traditional seat of Aquileia, as attested in an imperial charter of December 811 (MGH, D. Kar. I., n. 214; cfr. Krahwinkler, 1992, 168-170).

Which were the suffragans of terraferma Aquileia at the beginning of the ninth century? With a few uncertainties we can enumerate: Verona, Mantua, Vicenza, Padua, Treviso, Ceneda, Belluno, Concordia, Feltre, Asolo, Trento and Como. The dioceses of Istria were controversial.

### The Church of Grado and its Iстриan Suffragans

The *placitum* of Riziano does not even mention the bishop of terraferma Aquileia, who would have had his residence at Cividale. This omission is not only due to the possibility that in the year 804 Paulinus' successor may not yet have been in office but is also due to the fact that the "nova Aquileia", that is Grado, was recognised as the metropolitan church of Istria and the sees mentioned in the *placitum*. Grado had for a few decades enjoyed support from Rome. Around the year 770 John of Grado (*Iohannes servorum dei servus humilimus episcopus*) complained to the Pope about the Lombards, the *gens perfida*, who inhibited the ordination of bishops in Istria.<sup>2</sup> Moreover,

2 "[...] quod gens perfida Langobardorum sanctae nostrae ecclesiae invaserunt hereditatem, insuper et fidem pastorem rectitudinis in ipsa Histriensi provincia abdicarunt et providentiae suae nuper usque ordinationes ecclesiasticas non distollunt perficere" (MGH Epistolae III, 712 f.; Epistolae Langobardicae n. 19).

"stubborn" Istrian bishops had severed ties with Grado and consecrated each other. Pope Stephen III exhorted them to accept the authority of the archbishop of Grado.<sup>3</sup> In another letter the Pope confirmed John's metropolitan status.<sup>4</sup>

In a letter to Charlemagne, who had recently become "king of the Lombards", Pope Hadrian I for the first time recognised the bishop of Grado by the title "patriarch".<sup>5</sup> Both the Pope and the Frankish king granted favours to Grado thereby intending to push back the Byzantine sphere of influence in the northern Adriatic. Charlemagne's confirmation of Grado's possession and ecclesiastical immunity some time between 790 and 800 was the first obvious interference by the Frankish king in the politics of maritime Venice (Classen, 1988, 91, n. 345). The *duces* of Venice had had patriarch John murdered in 802. In 803 his successor Fortunatus, *patriarcha Gradensis ecclesiae*, received the pallium from Pope Leo III. He also enjoyed Charlemagne's protection, after he had fled to the terraferma in the spring of that year. Thus the western Emperor confirmed the subordination of the Istrian dioceses to the patriarch of Grado, *Venetiarum et Istriensium patriarcha*. This happened during Fortunatus' stay at Salz by the river Saale in mid-August 803, where the envoys of the basileus (Nicephorus) were also present (MGH, D. Kar. I., nn. 200 and 201; Classen, 1988, 91-93; Krahwinkler, 1992, 215 ff.).

At the time of the *placitum* of Riziano the patriarch of the *Aquileiensis ecclesia* which here means the "nova Aquileia" Grado is in charge of at least five, perhaps six suffragan dioceses in Istria. At any rate, only five are represented by bishops on this occasion. The correlation of bishops and dioceses remains, as is well known, open to discussion (Krahwinkler, 1992, 226 f.; Bratož, 1994, 63 f.). There is no indication that Koper/Capodistria was an episcopal *sedes* around 800.

### King Pippin of Italy and the Frankish-Byzantine Conflict until 812

In his *divisio regnorum* of February 806 Charlemagne attributed large areas north of *Italia quae et Langobardia dicitur* to King Pippin, whose realm extended into modern Switzerland and Germany south of the Danube (MGH, Capitularia I, n. 45; cfr. Wolf-

3 "Itaque pervenit ad nos nuncio precurrente, quod vos omnes episcopi ipsius Istriae provinciae constituti, qui canonica traditione a priscis temporibus sub iuris districtione ac consecratione sanctae Gradensis ecclesiae archiepiscopatus esse videmini, nunc, quod cum magno cordis dolore dicimus, seularibus convolantes auxiliis ab eadem episcopatus sede protervo spiritu inflati recedere presumpsistis et inter vos, quod numquam auditum est, unus alterutrum vosmet ipsos consecratis" (MGH Epistolae III, 714; Epistolae Langobardicae n. 20).

4 "[...] magna te, reverentissime frater, angustia moeroreque fore attritum cognovimus a perfidis et malignis aemulis vestrae Istriarum provinciae. [...] quoniam in nostro pacto generali, quod inter Romanos, Francos et Longobardos dignosciter provenisse, et ipsa vestra Istriarum provincia constat esse confirmata atque annexa simulque et Venetiarum provincia. [...]" (MGH Epistolae III, 715; Epistolae Langobardicae n. 21; cfr. Bratož, 1994, 59 ff).

5 "Itaque innotescimus excellentiae vestrae suscepisse nos epistolam directam nobis a Iohanne patriarcha Gradense" (MGH Epistolae III, 576 f.; Codex Carolinus n. 54).

ram, 1995a, 143 f., 158 f.). Moreover, this enlargement of Pippin's Italian kingdom encompassed also the Bavarian *plaga orientalis* between the rivers Danube and Drau/Drava. However, the *divisio regnorum* of 806 remained ineffective: Pippin died in July 810 and his brother Charles in December 811.

Pippin's sudden death in July 810 created a new political situation. Diplomatic contacts between Aachen and Constantinople were intensified. One of the prominent members of the Frankish deputation travelling to Constantinople in 811 was the Friulian count Aio, *Langobardus de Foro Iuli*, as he is called in the Frankish annals (ARF, a. 811). The epoch-making result of these diplomatic activities was the treaty between the Frankish and the Byzantine emperors in 812: Charlemagne and Michael I. This implied the recognition of Istria as Frankish and Dalmatia as Byzantine territories and spheres of influence (Classen, 1988, 93-97; Katičić, 1999, 280).

Thus Grado with its suffragans in Istria was a metropolis of the Frankish Empire, as was Aquileia in the terraferma. Charlemagne's view is obvious from his so-called testament of 811, which has been preserved in the form of a *breviarium* in Einhard's *Vita Karoli magni* (c. 33). Five of twenty-one metropolitan seats of Charlemagne's Empire are located in Italy: *Roma, Ravenna, Mediolanum, Forum Iulii* (i.e. Cividale) and *Gradus* (i.e. Grado). The Emperor clearly avoided the name of the metropolis *Aquileia* on which both patriarchal dignitaries based their claims. The jurisdictional controversy became virulent in the period of Louis the Pious, when the synod of Mantua in 827 decided in favour of Aquileia under patriarch Maxentius (MGH, Concilia II, n. 47; cfr. Krahwinkler, 1992, 172 ff.). At that time Fortunatus of Grado, that glamorous church politician, was already a dead man, which made the new decision easier.

Another indirect result of King Pippin's sudden death was the formal establishment of the river Drau/Drava as the border between the dioceses of Salzburg and Aquileia in June 811 (MGH, D. Kar. I., n. 211). Maybe King Pippin had envisaged such a decision in summer 796, and his father may have confirmed it while he was in Salzburg in October 803<sup>6</sup> – a point of time which comes close to the *placitum* of Rižana/Risano. May we assume that Charlemagne even "prepared" this *placitum* while he was in Salzburg?

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6 The final sentence in *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum* c. 6 is obviously based on the *corroboratio* of an imperial charter: "Postmodum ergo anno DCCCIII Karolus imperator Bagoariam intravit et in mense Octobrio Salzburg venit et praefatam concessionem filii sui iterans potestative multis adstantibus suis fidelibus adfirmavit et in aevum inconvulsam fieri concessit." On the corresponding entries in *Annales Iuvavenses maiores* a. 803 ("Carolus imperator in Bagoaria mense Augusto, in Iuvavense civitate mense Octobr."), *Annales Iuvavenses maximi* a. 803 and *Annales Emmerammi maiores* a. 803 cfr. Lošek, 1997, 112 with n. 80 and also n. 81; Wolfram, 1995, 194 with n. 6 and 286 with n. 503.

OGLEJSKA CERKEV (OGLEJSKI CERKVI), FURLANIJA IN ISTR  
V ČASU RIŽANSKEGA PLACITA

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**POVZETEK**

*V prvem desetletju devetega stoletja je oglejska cerkev pripadala cesarstvu Karla Velikega. Človek, ki je nadziral ta ozemlja, je bil – formalno že od leta 781 – kralj Pipin, o čemer govori tudi rižanski placit iz leta 804.*

*Furlanska vojvodina, ki je bila del karolinškega cesarstva že od leta 774, je imela v devetdesetih letih 8. stoletja, med vojnami proti Avarom, pomembno geostrateško funkcijo. Leta 796 je kralj Pipin sklical sinodo ob Donavi, ki ji je predsedoval oglejski patriarh Paulinus. Frankovske in italijanske čete so v devetdesetih letih 8. stoletja dobile podporo iz Istre.*

*Oglejski škof – škof terraferma Aquileia – ki naj bi živel v Čedadu, v rižanskem placitu sploh ni omenjan. "Aquileia", ki je citirana v placitu, je pravzaprav "nova Aquileia", to je Gradež. Patriarh Fortunat je ključna osebnost v preiskavi, ki jo je opravila cesarska komisija. Izjemnega pomena za zgodovino Furlanije okrog leta 800 sta tudi člana te komisije, grofa Cadolao in Aio. Prvi je bil naslednik furlanskega vojvode (umrl leta 799), drugi pa član langobardskega plemstva in človek, ki se je po letu 799 nadvse primerno znašel v središču frankovske politike. Franki so si prizadevali stabilizirati zapleteni politični in cerkveni sistem v Furlaniji in Istri. Oba patriarha, tako oglejski (čedadski) kot gradeški, naj bi z namenom, da bi nevtralizirala vpliv Bizanca v severnem Jadranu, služila "frankovskemu sistemu". Paulinus Oglejski (umrl leta 802) je bil velik zaveznik Karla Velikega. Fortunatu Gradeškemu je bil zagotovljen metropolitni status glede na istrske škofije (Venetiarum et Istriensium patriarcha) leta 803. Povezava med škofi in škofijami v rižanskem placitu ni jasna, v vsakem primeru pa so jih imeli za gradeške pomožne škofo.*

*Divisio regnorum Karla Velikega iz leta 806 je Pipinu prisodila nadaljnje italijansko kraljestvo. Vendar pe je ta "delitev kraljestev" izgubila svoj pomen po Pipinovi nenadni smrti julija leta 810.*

*Odločitve, ki naj bi imele dolgoročen učinek, so bile sprejete v letih takoj po dokončnem dogovoru, da reka Drava postane meja med salzburško in oglejsko škofijo junija 811, in po sporazumu med frankovskim in bizantinskim cesarstvom leta 812. Glede na sporazum je bila Istra del karolinškega, Dalmacija pa bizantinskega vplivnega območja.*

*Ključne besede: Furlanija, Istra, Oglej, Gradež, cerkvena zgodovina, Franki, Slovani, Longobardi, 8.-9. stoletje*

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The Patriarchate of Aquileia was an episcopal see in northeastern Italy, centred on the ancient city of Aquileia situated at the head of the Adriatic, on what is now the Italian seacoast. For many centuries it played an important part in history, particularly in that of the Holy See and northern Italy, and a number of church councils were held there. No longer a residential bishopric, it is today classified as an archiepiscopal titular see. - Harald Krahwinkler; *The Church(es) of Aquileia, Friuli and Istria at the Time of the Rignano Placitum*, 2001. - Erkki Lehtinen; *Notions of a Finnish National Identity During the Period of Swedish Rule*, 1981. - Farid Ljuca; *Arterial blood pressure and systemic vascular resistance after revascularization of myocardium with and without cardiopulmonary bypass*, 2008. - Adeline Masquelier; *Negotiating Futures: Islam, Youth, and the State In Niger*, 2006. - Mark Mazower; *The Balkans, From the End the Byzantium to the Present Day*, 2000. - Sheila McTighe; *The Hieroglyphic Landscape: Libertinage and the Late Allegories of Nicolas Poussin*, 1987. - Anđelko Milardović; *The International Community and Future Scenarios for Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2009. Istria had become the most southeastern province of the Carolingian realm. In the last quarter of the 8th century, usually dated to 788. This was the result. A time. Strategically positioned on the sea shore, at the mouth of the Mirna river, it connected two old "highways" the sea and the river. At the same time the new centre was in between two old bishoprics, Parentium (Parentium) and Trieste (Tergeste), which were at the time of the Carolingian conquest still hostile, belonging to another Church organization depending on the patriarch from Grado. Combining those patterns with an evidence from the Placitum Rignano, it can be stated that a large number of those fortified settlements with different functions were established. Patriarch John X receives the former President of the University of Balamand, Dr. Elie Salem at the Patriarchal residence in Balamand. Read the full article here. There is no such thing as corruption, but there are corrupt people who create corruption. Patriarch John X receives Father Tanios Khalil, the head of the Association of Theological Institutes and Faculties in the Middle East, accompanied by Dr. Dany El-Obeid. Read the full article here. Patriarch John X Receives the Greek Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.