





























documents. Where the original (or pseudo-original) single sheet charters survive, we can also apply palaeographical (script-historical) criteria. The key point is that script changes subtly but significantly over time, and it is a rare forger indeed who can imitate the writing of an earlier age with complete mastery.<sup>27</sup>

### *What is Forgery?*

With these parameters established, we may turn to the thorny issue of defining forgery. Much ink has been spilt on this, so we may restrict ourselves to the essentials. Conceptions of forgery and falsity are culturally conditioned and defined by their antitheses: originality and authenticity. Where the original is not valued above the copy, there is little space for a concept of the fake; in such a world, any image or text which evokes the forms of the original may pass for it.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, where the original is prized above the copy, forgery is often rife. Medieval documentary culture certainly qualifies here. Throughout the Middle Ages, original charters were accorded greater weight than copies. And considerable effort went into their authentication, by means of seals, subscriptions and monograms—devices all intended to prevent copies passing for originals. This is not to say that modern ideas about forgery and authenticity can be applied across the board, however. A helpful contrast is offered by the world of medieval art. Here the cult of the original had yet to establish itself, and forgery was indeed an alien concept; works of art were judged by the quality of their execution, not whether they had been produced by a specific artist or in a specific context.<sup>29</sup>

From a purely analytical standpoint, documentary forgery can be isolated easily enough: a document is forged if it claims to be something it is not. A diploma of the late tenth century pretending to be an original of Charlemagne is a fake; one of the same era claiming to be a copy of an earlier charter of Charlemagne is not (or at least, not necessarily). The question is, therefore, one of intentions (not motives): was the aim to deceive? A case in point is offered by the Donation of Constantine, perhaps the most famous forgery of the Middle Ages. In this, the late antique emperor Constantine I (306–37) is said to have conferred the entire Western Roman Empire on Pope Sylvester I (314–35) and his successors, including the Lateran Palace and many other specific (but still very extensive) rights in Rome and Italy. The anonymous eighth-century author of the Donation, who was inspired by the (largely fictional) late antique ‘Acts of Sylvester’ (*Actus Silvestri*), may well have believed that he was doing no more than recording the real actions of the historical Constantine I;

27. Crick, ‘Historical Literacy’, 169–70. See also T. J. Brown, ‘Detection’.

28. Han, *Shanzai*.

29. Lenain, *Art Forgery*, 46–147. See also C. S. Wood, *Forgery*.

nevertheless, he must have known that the words he used were not those of the emperor. At the same time, he knew that they would command greater respect if others believed this to be so. This was forgery, pious or not.<sup>30</sup>

Theory may be clear, but reality is messy. If, as sometimes happens, a scribe produces an imitative copy of a text—one which closely reproduces the appearance of the original—is this forgery? By our criteria, the answer must be: only if intended to pass for the original. The problem is, how do we know? And how do we know that, even if not originally intended to deceive, it did not later pass for the original?<sup>31</sup> In practice there is, therefore, considerable middle ground between forged and authentic. The situation is further complicated by the tendency of copyists to update the documents they transmit. Much as we instinctively use modern registers to discuss the plays of Shakespeare, so medieval scribes often reverted to their own accustomed idioms when describing and transcribing earlier documents. An ancient formula might thus become a modern one, even if the contents are otherwise faithfully transmitted. These problems are particularly acute for documents from the earliest centuries of the Middle Ages. At most one royal diploma survives in its original format from Lombard Italy (568–774); the rest are all preserved in copies, often from much later. Some of these are quite faithful to their lost exemplars; but many show signs of updating, reflecting the legal, linguistic and cultural registers of subsequent centuries.<sup>32</sup> Is this forgery? As before, the answer must be: only if intended to deceive. The difficulty, however, lies in determining where harmless intervention stops and active deception starts. If the updating consciously improves the terms of the original, this is forgery; but since we do not have the originals for comparison, it is frequently hard to be sure. Moreover, even the most blatant forgeries tend to draw on authentic materials, preserving elements of (authentic) earlier texts. Forged and authentic are, therefore, rough-and-ready labels, which can obscure as much as they inform.

Once dated and localized, forgeries reveal a great deal about the context in which they were produced. The most common types of text forged in the Middle Ages were, as noted above, charters conveying or confirming legal rights, particularly of liberty, immunity and exemption—texts not dissimilar from the ancient epigraphic forgeries with which we began. Like those, they provide precious glimpses into how, when and why the rights of individual religious houses were contested. Moreover, because they are fictional, they give their authors freer rein than authentic texts, furnishing privileged access to

30. *Constitutum Constantini*, ed. Fuhrmann, with Goodson and Nelson, 'Roman Constitutions'. Cf. Constable, 'Forgery and Plagiarism', 39; Hiatt, *Making of Medieval Forgeries*, 139–41, whose arguments do not entirely convince on this point.

31. Cf. Boüiard, *Manuel de diplomatique*, i, 188–90.

32. Brühl, *Studien zu den langobardischen Königsurkunden*. See also Everett, *Literacy*, 186–87.

what Karl Leyser memorably called the ‘ought world’ of the age—a vision of the world as it should be, not as it is.<sup>33</sup> In this respect, it is important to bear in mind that charters of the tenth and eleventh centuries were more than legal texts (though they were this too). As Hagen Keller and Geoffrey Koziol have shown, they were powerful ideological tools, capable of shaping social and political realities.<sup>34</sup> This is why they were so highly valued; it is also why they were so often forged. In this context, it is important to appreciate that forgery itself is a deeply historical act. Each falsified document is an attempt to rewrite the past or plug gaps in an existing narrative. Counterfeit charters therefore not only tell us about contemporary concerns, but also shed light on attitudes towards the past. Scholars of early modern Europe have long noted that forgery and antiquarianism go hand in hand: as scholarly knowledge of (and interest in) the ancient world grew, so too did attempts to falsify its records. It has been less frequently appreciated that the same holds true of the ancient and medieval worlds; here, too, forgery is was often a sign of a heightened interest in the past.<sup>35</sup>

Pilgrim’s era is of particular interest in this respect. Patrick Geary famously argued that the tenth and eleventh centuries saw a sea-change in attitudes toward the past in western Europe. These years saw new strategies of memorialization emerge, with a particular focus on local and institutional memory.<sup>36</sup> Geary’s work is now complemented by that of Theo Riches, who notes that in these years many religious houses began to write their own narrative histories in the form of the ‘deeds of bishops’ (*gesta episcoporum*) genre. Such centres were starting to conceive of themselves as corporate entities, with collective pasts of their own.<sup>37</sup> For most major houses, we can trace a continuous history from the tenth or eleventh centuries, but only rarely can we take this back much further. It is not simply that there were no earlier records (though in some places, this was so); it is that earlier historical and archival undertakings took forms which did not encourage their later transmission and preservation. What we are seeing is, therefore, the formation of new kinds of institutional memory and identity which were to prove remarkably resilient. These processes are reflected in the upsurge in forgery noted in the Preface. In some regions, particularly in France, there are important ninth-century antecedents; but across the board, the tenth and eleventh centuries saw the spread and diversification of documentary falsification. Viewed in these terms, this period, famously branded an iron, leaden and dark age (‘saeculum . . .

33. K. J. Leyser, ‘Tenth-Century Condition’, 4–5.

34. Keller, ‘Hulderweis durch Privilegien’; Koziol, *Politics of Memory*.

35. Grafton, *Forgers and Critics*; Rowland, *Scarith*. Cf. Higbie, *Collectors, Scholars, and Forgers*.

36. Geary, *Phantoms*. For discussion and criticism: Morelle, ‘Histoire et archives’. See also Southern, ‘Sense of the Past’, to somewhat similar effect.

37. Riches, ‘Changing Political Horizons’. Cf. Sot, *Gesta episcoporum*.



ferreum . . . plubeum, atque . . . obscurum') by the great Counter-Reformation cardinal Cesare Baronio (d. 1607), emerges as an exciting and dynamic era.<sup>38</sup> To extend Baronio's own ferrous metaphor, it was in the crucible of these years that new identities and attitudes were forged, ones which would define the *Ancien Régime*.

Geary was alive to the potential of forgeries within this context, noting how at Saint-Denis, north of Paris, falsification was an important part of repackaging the Merovingian past in the 1060s. And Amy Remensnyder has similarly underlined the important memorial function of foundation charters—many of them forged—in the religious houses of southern France.<sup>39</sup> Still, forgery remains largely (and strangely) absent from the many studies of medieval memory, in which manuscripts and narrative histories loom large.<sup>40</sup> Such work provides a helpful framework for the present book. The essential point of departure is that memory is not simply an individual affair; it is a social phenomenon, reflecting wider socio-political trends. Especially important here are collective memories, which play a key part in group formation; these reflect (and inform) local, regional and national identities.<sup>41</sup> They are of particular salience in periods of rupture and innovation, when new pasts are developed in response to a changing present, processes famously dubbed 'the invention of tradition' by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (with reference to the nineteenth century).<sup>42</sup> We are apparently observing something along these lines in the later tenth century, with forgery representing part of a wider set of initiatives aiming to recast local understandings of the past in the light of new challenges.

Particularly useful from the perspective of the present study is the work of the German couple Jan and Aleida Assmann. In his influential book of 1990, the former argued that collective memory can be subdivided into communicative and cultural memory (*kommunikatives* and *kulturelles Gedächtnis*). The former embodies lived oral tradition, stretching back two to three generations (or about eighty years); the latter, on the other hand, is constituted of distant origin myths and legends. Both are important, but it is cultural memory which typically defines group membership. If we were to take the example of the modern United States, the Bush (Sr) and Clinton presidencies belong firmly to the realm of communicative memory, while the Washington and Lincoln

38. Baronio, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, x, 647.

39. Geary, *Phantoms*, 107–13; Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*.

40. Among others, see Goetz, 'Gegenwart der Vergangenheit'; Hen and Innes, eds, *Uses of the Past*; W. Pohl, *Werkstätte der Erinnerung*, and 'History in Fragments'; McKitterick, *History and Memory*; Ugé, *Creating the Monastic Past*; B. Pohl, *Dudo*; Rembold, 'History and (Selective) Memory'; Greer, Hicklin and Esders, eds, *Using and Not Using the Past*.

41. Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*; Wertsch, *Voices*; G. Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 118–74, 199–256.

42. Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds, *Invention of Tradition*.

eras have long since entered that of cultural memory. The former play comparatively little role in questions of national identity, whereas the latter are central to them. The Assmanns also identify a number of factors that go into creating and maintaining cultural memory. In literate societies, this is typically characterized by a recognizable (if often implicit) canon, excerpted from the larger body of the recorded past. To stick with the example of the United States, Washington and Lincoln belong to the country's active cultural memory (the Assmanns' canon), where they are kept alive by popular writings, sayings and cultural references. Other early presidents, however, such as James Monroe (d. 1831) and Martin Van Buren (d. 1862), are less frequently invoked; in Aleida Assmann's terms, they belong to the dormant archive (or 'storage cultural memory') of the nation, which must be activated if it is to play a part in questions of identity.<sup>43</sup> Viewed in these terms, forgery can certainly tell us much about the formation of cultural memory in the Middle Ages, especially within ecclesiastical institutions. To forge documents was to recreate the past, participating in a process of canonization; this is how certain iconic figures and moments came to dominate local and national memory.

Given this potential, it is perhaps surprising that there has not been more research into the memorial aspects of medieval forgery. As noted, Geary and Remensnyder have undertaken pioneering work here. And more recently, Robert F. Berkhofer III and Constance Bouchard have added important detail, noting the deeply historicizing nature of forgery. Along similar lines, Alfred Hiatt has underlined the narrative qualities of false documents, particularly in the later Middle Ages.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, a connected story of the development of forgery, as reflected in attitudes towards institutional identity, remains to be told. Part of the problem lies the nature of forgery itself. It was undertaken locally, with a close eye to the history and interests of the religious house (or houses) in question. It therefore demands close contextual study of a kind which has discouraged generalization and synthesis. The most wide-ranging study to date—that of Hiatt—sensibly restricts itself to one country (England) and century (the fifteenth). Here, I have sought to range more widely, though similar limitations have had to be imposed.

The situation is further complicated by distinct national historiographical traditions, which begin to exert a strong pull on scholarship regarding these years. Because France, England and Germany can all trace a more (or less)

43. J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, translated as *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*. See also J. Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*; A. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, esp. 119–34.

44. Berkhofer, *Day of Reckoning*, 40–48; Bouchard, *Rewriting Saints*, 22–37; Hiatt, *Making of Medieval Forgeries*. See also Ugé, *Creating the Monastic Past*, 149–53; Insley, 'Communities Past'; Maskarinec, 'Why Remember Ratchis?'. A monograph on the subject is anticipated from Berkhofer. For preliminary studies, see his 'Canterbury Forgeries', and 'Guerno the Forger'.

continuous history back to the tenth century, the history of these regions tends to be framed in terms of the birth and development of the medieval nation—and by proxy, the modern nation state. It is largely undertaken by historians of the country in question, with an eye to later developments, and connections and parallels are easily overlooked. Even in Italy, where no such simple continuity can be charted, the influence of national master-narratives is powerful; there, the tenth century is viewed in terms of the pre-history of the urban communes, which would dominate the politics of the peninsula well into (and beyond) the Renaissance.<sup>45</sup> These historiographical traditions strongly colour the way we view these years. The story of Italy is one of regions and cities, of the foundations of the later communes; that of England, one of kings, courts and administration, of the pre-history of the impressive Angevin state of the later twelfth century. France and Germany sit somewhere between these poles. In the former, the tenth century is an age of regional magnates and monastic reform, a period of royal weakness before the later ascent of the Capetians; in the latter, it is a time of surprising (but ultimately abortive) royal success, soon to be overtaken by the centripetal forces of the locality. By the late tenth century it is, therefore, hard to tell a connected tale at the best of times; that it has not been attempted for forgery is perfectly understandable.

This book is written in the belief that a more connected story can and should be told, even if it must be assembled from fragments. As Heinrich Fichtenau demonstrated, similar social practices and mentalities can be traced across the Latin West in these years, particularly in those regions which had once been part of the Carolingian empire. And much of the most exciting recent work spans national historiographical traditions in this fashion, revealing how subjects as diverse as ecclesiastical reform and queenship can benefit from a wider perspective.<sup>46</sup> In this respect, the differing historiographies sketched above can inform as much as they obscure. By engaging with studies of Italian urban history side by side with ones of English administration, French monastic reform and German regional history (*Landesgeschichte*), we may hope to achieve a more rounded picture of all regions.

Yet historiographical comparison is only truly meaningful when underpinned by detailed source criticism. And here charters (and forgeries) offer a promising point of entry, since they survive in substantial numbers from across these regions. The aim cannot, however, be to write a history of every falsified document of the later tenth century. Partly, this is a matter of pragmatism. By the final decades of the century, forgery was so widespread that

45. On France and Germany: Brühl, *Deutschland—Frankreich*, esp. 7–82; and on Italy: Wickham, *Sleepwalking*, esp. 8–11.

46. Fichtenau, *Lebensordnungen*, available in English (without footnotes) as *Living in the Tenth Century*. For subsequent studies in this vein: Hamilton, *Church and People*; MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship*.

anything approaching systematic treatment would be impossible. Nor, in any case, would it be desirable. The disparate nature of falsification means that comprehensive investigation risks getting lost in the detail: as examples are multiplied, it becomes harder to keep the big picture in focus. The attempt here, therefore, is to balance the benefits of the bird's and worm's eye view. Five forgery complexes—those of Worms, Passau, Abingdon, Fleury and Vercelli, mentioned in the Preface—are used to combine close contextual analysis with wider discussion and synthesis. Each case requires considerable contextualization, both historical and historiographical. But the result of taking them together is, I sincerely hope, greater than the sum of the constituent parts, a picture which allows for local variation alongside pan-European trends.

The case studies have been selected so as to span as much of the Latin West as possible, without overburdening an already heavily laden author (and critical apparatus). They take in all of the realms which had once been part of the Carolingian empire, as well as England, where the Carolingian legacy was strong (if indirect). East to west, they stretch from the Danube to the Loire (by way of the Rhine); north to south, they span the Thames Valley to the Piedmontese Sesia. They have also been chosen to take in different types of religious house, with two monasteries and three bishoprics represented. Finally, in each case forgery has been dated closely to the half century or so spanning the turn of the first millennium (*c.* 970–1020). This allows us to paint as detailed a picture as possible, one chronologically tight but geographically diverse (though, as we shall see, some of these dates have shifted under scrutiny). In most of these cases, forgery can also be associated with known individuals, enabling us to bring much ancillary evidence to bear.

What follows is thus an exercise in serial microhistory, the first—but hopefully not the last—attempt to study the documentary traditions of tenth- and eleventh-century Europe side by side. The overarching argument, to the extent that there is one, is that forgery tells us a great deal about changing attitudes towards past and present. In this respect, the later tenth century emerges as a significant turning-point: a time when mentalities changed alongside other elements of the socio-political order. Here, forgery speaks not of the blind anachronism earlier scholars saw as characteristic of the Middle Ages, but rather of a budding antiquarianism which would not have been out of place in *Quattrocento* Florence. Indeed, like later Renaissance counterfeits, these fakes were often intended for local consumption, giving voice to new regional and institutional identities. Karl Leyser once spoke of the 'ascent of Latin Europe' in these years, of how writers of the early eleventh century began to express a new-found confidence in the social and political order of the West.<sup>47</sup> The texts surveyed here flesh out Leyser's picture, illustrating how such processes played

47. K. J. Leyser, 'Ascent of Latin Europe'.

out on the ground. The forgers examined may be somewhat humbler than Leyser's historical narrators, but their voices are no less worthy of attention.

As an exercise in microhistory, this book makes no claim to comprehensiveness. In order to make the material manageable, I have focused on royal and papal documents at five centres, leaving local ('private') documentary traditions largely to one side. I likewise only touch on narrative history in passing. This is not because the subject is uninteresting or unimportant, but rather because it deserves treatment on its own terms. Points of contact between narrative history and forgery are, in any case, taken up in the Conclusions. Other absences weigh more heavily. Some will understandably baulk at my reticence regarding the Iberian Peninsula, a region rich in documentary records of these years (including forgeries), but regarding which I have little competence and no formal training. Others will, with equal justification, regret the absence of a female religious house among my examples. More still will find further matters wanting. All I can hope is that these dissatisfied readers will take my oversights as a challenge, and set about rectifying them. When they do, perhaps they will see further for being perched on these diminutive shoulders.

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