

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES AND THEIR EFFECTS IN THE CAROLINGIAN AGE: PREFACE

Shigeto Kikuchi

“Communication” as a theme of medieval studies is no longer new, but it still attracts the attention of many historians, who publish plenty of works on this topic. These works cover a wide range of themes related to various modes of communication — written, unwritten, and non-verbal ones.^[1]

As regards the early Middle Ages, especially the Carolingian age, there are also recent important contributions to this field of research. Regarding research concerned with royal government, it is worth referring, for example, to the works of Rosamond McKitterick and Martin Gravel on the political communication within the Frankish kingdom, which made royal government possible under Charlemagne and Louis the Pious.^[2] Capitularies, reckoned among the most important normative texts of the age, can no longer be regarded merely as royal decrees. Many of the texts counted in the category of capitularies^[3] are now considered as parts of a communication process between the king and his elites, which promoted the political integration of the Frankish kingdom.^[4] In the political communication between the center and regions on the level of royal government, an important role was played by *missi dominici* (royal envoys), who were in many cases the first users of capitularies. Carolingian *missi*, who were regarded by earlier studies as royal agents controlling regional officials, mostly belonged to the political elite, and their power was based in regions where they came from, held office, or owned land property. Thus, they could represent the interests of the monarch, of their peers, of their regional fellows and followers, and of themselves in the political communication at the highest level.^[5] However, we must never forget that such widely extended communication centered around the royal court and on general assemblies was based on and connected with small-scale communication at the local level, such as at regional assemblies.

Royal diplomas are now also studied in the context of communication. On the one hand, a variety of literal and visual elements in them are considered as expressions of political messages. On the other, each issuing process of a diploma is regarded as a process of communication.^[6] Thus, we can construe an issuing act of a diploma as a publicly staged performance, or as an issuing ritual. Geoffrey Koziol emphasizes the “performative” aspects of royal diplomas and their use, arguing that they were “issued in order to institute, publicize, and memorialize crucial alterations in the political regime.”^[7]

[1] Cf. Marco Mostert, *A Bibliography of Works on Medieval Communication*, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 2 (Turnhout, 2012).

[2] Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne. The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge, 2008), especially pp. 214-291; Martin Gravel, *Distances, rencontres, communications. Réaliser l'empire sous Charlemagne et Louis le Pieux*, Collection Haut Moyen Âge 15 (Turnhout, 2012). See also Jennifer R. Davis, *Charlemagne's Practice of Empire* (Cambridge, 2015), especially pp. 293-335.

[3] On the problem of this category, see the contribution of Takuro Tsuda in this issue.

[4] The most recent survey of studies on capitularies is Sören Kaschke and Britta Mischke, “Capitularies in the Carolingian

Period,” *History Compass* 17/10 (2019): e12592.

[5] Cf. Shigeto Kikuchi, *Herrschaft, Delegation und Kommunikation in der Karolingerzeit. Untersuchungen zu den Missi dominici (751-888)*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica Hilfsmittel 31 (Wiesbaden, forthcoming).

[6] Cf. Mark Mersiewsky, *Die Urkunde in der Karolingerzeit. Originale, Urkundenpraxis und politische Kommunikation*, 2 vols., MGH Schriften, 60 (Wiesbaden, 2015). See also earlier literature cited in the introduction of Kikuchi's contribution in this issue.

[7] Geoffrey Koziol, *The Politics of Memory and Identity in Carolingian Royal Diplomas. The West Frankish Kingdom (840-987)*, Utrecht studies in medieval literacy 19 (Turnhout, 2012) (citation from p. 3).

Other communication methods like envoys, messengers, and letters are also gathering attention, because they can be undoubtedly considered among the most important “media” in early medieval long-distance communication. With regard to early medieval letters and letter-communication,^[8] Achim Thomas Hack’s book about the letter collection known as the *Codex Carolinus* must be cited. He explored how communication through letters was and could be established. His meticulous research on early medieval letter-praxis reveals not only the meanings of literal elements in letters like salutations, forms of address, closing prayers, and so on, but also the functions of envoys as letter-bringers and the presents that accompanied letters.^[9] On envoys and messengers who were sent both with and without letters, Volker Scior published a series of articles and revealed the contemporary images of, expectations about, and functions of envoys in the context of early medieval communication-praxis. According to Scior, a faithful and reliable envoy should make communication between the two parties distanced spatially possible and stable as an agent physically representing his sender. Envoys acted at the intersection of written, oral, performative, and symbolic communication.^[10]

With regard to the aforementioned early medieval symbolic communication, Ildar H. Garipzanov studied “a symbolic language used in the indirect communication of Carolingian authority,” dealing with “media” like various titles, monarchical signs, coins, images and portraits, and liturgy.^[11]

This short survey can reveal that various materials, people, and acts are now studied in terms of communication. This collection of articles was planned to swim with the tide of recent historiography. Four Carolingianists tackle the theme of “communication techniques and their effects” with a question in mind: “how” did people in the Carolingian age use the various communication media available to them? Through the reexamination of the so-called *Capitulary of Frankfurt* and the reception of the *Admonitio generalis* in Bavaria, Takuro Tsuda urges us to change our understanding about political communication under Charlemagne. Shigeto Kikuchi attempts to reconsider the sanction clauses in Carolingian diplomas and contextualize their use. Martin Gravel focuses on original royal letters to reconsider Hartmut Hoffmann’s paradigm concerning letters and messengers. Sakae Tange, analyzing various documents concerning monasteries, especially around Adalhard of Corbie, attempts to reconstruct some features of “local communication” between the elites (including royal inquiry commission) and local inhabitants (including local monastic agents), as well as among the latter. All the contributions shall provide new insights into Carolingian society.

*Aoyama Gakuin University
Tokyo, Japan*

[8] The most recent survey of studies on early medieval letters is Mark Mersiowsky, “Früh- und hochmittelalterliche Briefe: ein Überblick,” in *Briefe aus dem Spätmittelalter: Herrschaftliche Korrespondenz im deutschen Südwesten*, ed. Peter Rückert (Stuttgart, 2015), pp. 9-31.

[9] Achim Thomas Hack, *Codex Carolinus. Päpstliche Epistolographie im 8. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols., Pápste und Papsttum 35 (Stuttgart, 2006-07).

[10] Volker Scior, “Stimme, Schrift und Performanz. ‘Übertragungen’ und ‘Reproduktionen’ durch frühmittelalterliche Boten,” in *Übertragungen. Formen und Konzepte von Reproduktion in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Britta Bußmann et. al., Trends in medieval philology 5 (Berlin – New York, 2005), pp. 77-99; “Veritas und certitudo oder: Warten auf Wissen. Boten in frühmittelalterlichen Informationsprozessen,” *Das Mittelalter* 11/1 (2006): 110-31; “Bemerkungen zum frühmittelalterlichen Boten- und Gesandtschaftswesen,” in *Der frühmittelalterliche Staat – europäische Perspektiven*, ed. Walter Pohl and Veronika Wieser, Denkschriften der

Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 386; Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 16 (Vienna, 2009), 315-29; “Vertrauen und Kontrolle. Boten als Augenzeugen in der mittelalterlichen Kommunikation,” in *Die Figur des Augenzeugen. Geschichte und Wahrheit im fächer- und epochenübergreifenden Vergleich*, ed. Amelie Rösinger and Gabriela Signori (Konstanz – Munich, 2014), pp. 27-40; “Vergegenwärtigung. Zur Präsenz des Boten in der brieflichen Kommunikation,” in *Frühmittelalterliche Briefe. Übermittlung und Überlieferung (4.-11. Jahrhundert) = La lettre au haut Moyen Age. Transmission et tradition épistolaires (IVe-XIe siècles)*, ed. Thomas Deswarte, Klaus Herbers, and Cornelia Scherer, Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 84 (Cologne – Weimar – Vienna, 2018), 35-50.

[11] Ildar H. Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World (c.751-877)*, Brill’s Series on the Early Middle Ages 16 (Leiden, 2008) (citation from p. 18).