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A FLOWER FIT FOR A KING: THE CAROLINGIAN ORIGINS OF THE FLEUR-DE-LIS AS A ROYAL SYMBOL**

DOI 10.19229/1828-230X/62012024

ABSTRACT: *The 'fleur-de-lis,' or 'flower of the lily,' was a well-known heraldic symbol of the French kingdom throughout the Middle Ages. While most scholarship on the symbolic fleur-de-lis has concentrated on the flower as a symbol of the Capetian dynasty, relatively little attention has been paid by historians to its Carolingian origins. This is primarily due to the fact that the fleur-de-lis first appeared as a heraldic emblem on the Capetian coat of arms. Nevertheless, the royal associations of the symbolic lily can be traced as far back as the Carolingian period. The fleur-de-lis, which has a long history in Christian symbolism as a sign of devotion to religious values, was originally incorporated into the regalia of the Carolingian dynasty. This article argues that the adoption of the symbol by Carolingian art initially occurred during the reign of Charlemagne as a religious motif, and was modeled after Byzantine and Lombard iconography. This study aims to trace the development of the fleur-de-lis in Christian and Carolingian culture by drawing on literary sources and iconographic evidence and argues that the lily evolved from a religious symbol into a royal sign following the reign of Charlemagne, subsequently becoming an essential component of the Carolingian regalia.*

KEYWORDS: *Fleur-de-lis, lily, symbolism, Christian iconography, Carolingian culture*

UN FIORE ADATTO A UN RE: LE ORIGINI CAROLINGIE DEL GIGLIO COME SIMBOLO REALE

SOMMARIO: *Il fleur-de-lys o 'fiore del giglio' era un noto simbolo araldico del regno francese per tutto il Medioevo. Mentre la maggior parte degli studi sul simbolico fleur-de-lis si è concentrata sul fiore come simbolo della dinastia dei Capetingi, gli storici hanno dedicato relativamente poca attenzione alle sue origini carolingie. Ciò è dovuto principalmente al fatto che il fleur-de-lis è apparso per la prima volta come emblema araldico sullo stemma dei Capetingi. Tuttavia, le associazioni reali del simbolico giglio possono essere rintracciate fin dal periodo carolingio. Il fleur-de-lis, che ha una lunga storia nel simbolismo cristiano come segno di devozione ai valori religiosi, era originariamente incorporato nelle insegne della dinastia carolingia. Questo articolo sostiene che l'adozione del simbolo da parte dell'arte carolingia si è verificata inizialmente durante il regno di Carlo Magno come motivo religioso ed è stata modellata sull'iconografia bizantina e longobarda. Questo studio si propone di tracciare lo sviluppo del giglio nella cultura cristiana e carolingia basandosi su fonti letterarie e prove iconografiche e sostiene che il giglio si è evoluto da simbolo religioso a segno reale dopo il regno di Carlo Magno, divenendo in seguito una componente essenziale delle insegne carolingie.*

PAROLE CHIAVE: *Fleur-de-lys, giglio, simbolismo, iconografia cristiana, cultura carolingia*

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** Abbreviations: Bnf (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris); StB (Stadtbibliothek und Stadtarchiv Trier); Bma (Bibliothèque municipale d'Abbeville); Bdb (Biblioteca Documenta Batthyaneum, Alba Iulia); Bav (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana); Wls (Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart).

Traditionally known by its French name 'fleur-de-lis', the 'flower of the lily' is a three-petal floral symbol depicted on the coat of arms of France from the Middle Ages to the French Revolution. The symbol, which was also adopted by several dynasties in Western Europe, still represents the House of Bourbon in France, the province of Quebec in Canada, New Orleans in the United States, and Florence in Italy¹. As a heraldic sign, the origins of the fleur-de-lis date back to the Capetian era (987-1328). As the use of heraldic symbols became necessary with changes in Western European armory in the late twelfth century, the fleur-de-lis gradually emerged as the dynastic emblem of the Capetian dynasty². However, as a sign of royalty, its earliest appearance dates back to the Carolingian period (751-887). Because of its religious connotations, including chastity and purity, the fleur-de-lis adorned the regalia of Carolingian kings. In iconography, poetry, and royal documents, the fleur-de-lis, in its many forms and expressions, appeared as a significant symbolic element of Carolingian piety and royalty.

The origins and meanings of the fleur-de-lis in French symbolism have been the subject of extensive research in Western scholarship. In particular, modern studies in French historiography have produced a substantial body of work aimed at interpreting the religious connotations associated with the lily figure³. In this regard, studies have addressed the significance of the fleur-de-lis in French history from various perspectives, including literary analysis and the examination of iconography. The historical development of the symbol in the late medieval and early modern periods has been a significant area of interest.

¹ M.C. Caldwell, 'Flower of The Lily': Late-medieval Religious and Heraldic Symbolism in Paris, *Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Ms Français 146*, «Early Music History», 33 (2014), pp. 1-60, at 2.

² C. Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France*, edited by F.L. Cheyette, University of California Press, Berkeley: 1991, p. 202. The earliest appearance of the fleur-de-lis on the French coat of arms dates back to the Prince Louis' seal of 1211. For more information on the development of the symbol in Capetian coat of arms, see W.M. Hinkle, *The Fleurs de Lis of the Kings of France 1285-1488*, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, pp. 1-4.

³ The majority of scholarship on the symbolic fleur-de-lis has concentrated on the flower as a symbol of the Capetian France. See, for example M. Prinnet, *Les Variations du nombre de fleurs de lis dans les armes de France*, «Bulletin Monumental», 75 (1911), pp. 469-88; R. Dennys, *The Heraldic Imagination*, Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., New York, 1976; 202; C. Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology* cit., pp. 201-25; 1991; W.M. Hinkle, *The Fleurs de Lis of the Kings of France* cit., 1-100; J.B. Cahours d'Aspry, *Des fleurs de lis et des armes de France: Légendes, histoire et symbolisme*, Atlantica, Biarritz, 1998; N. Civel, *La Fleur de France: Les Seigneurs d'Ile-de-France au XIIIe siècle*, Brepols, Turnhout, 2006. For a general introduction to medieval French heraldry, see G.J. Brault, *Early Blazon: Heraldic Terminology in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, with Special Reference to Arthurian literature*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1972, pp. 209-13.

However, research on the early medieval origins of the fleur-de-lis has remained relatively limited. Therefore, much of what is understood about the development of the symbol has been attributed to the Capetian era. The Carolingian origins of the fleur-de-lis, which eventually led to the incorporation of the symbol in Capetian coat of arms, have been overlooked⁴. The religious and political associations the symbol with the royal insignia, indeed, provided a necessary link between the Carolingian and Capetian symbolism.

While the fleur-de-lis developed into a religio-political symbol in the Carolingian society, the search for the origins of the stylized lily in Christianity goes as far back as the Roman empire⁵. During the late antiquity, the fleur-de-lis emerged as an important motif in early Christian literature and art. The value attributed to the symbolism of the lily thus carried over into early Byzantine iconography, making it an essential decoration element. Particularly in Byzantine Italy, the lilies gained a prominent place in religious iconography, adorning the scenes of divine figures from the Old and New Testament. As an emerging political power in Italy, the Lombards subsequently incorporated this tradition into their unique art style, which combined Germanic and Christian forms. After their conversion into orthodox Christianity, the fleur-de-lis became more apparent in Lombard compositions, creating an authentic expression of religious art⁶. With the Carolingian conquest of Italy, the lilies were finally incorporated into Frankish artworks and appeared as one of the main decoration motifs during the Carolingian Renaissance. This symbol, which includes numerous religious associations, gradually evolved into a sign of Carolingian royalty, signifying the rulers' devotion to the Christian values.

Due to the extensive use of the fleur-de-lis in a range of contexts, spanning from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, this study will

⁴ On the Carolingian influence during the Capetian era, see M. Kauffmann, *Satire, Pictorial Genre, and the Illustrations in BN fr. 146*, in M. Bent, A. Wathey (edited by) *Fauvel Studies: Allegory, Chronicle, Music, and Image in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Français 146*, pp. 285-306, at p. 293. On the depictions of Pepin and Charlemagne in the 14th and 15th century French iconography, see J. Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art, 2nd ed.*, Westview Press, Boulder, 2008, p. 67; M. Pastoureau, *Figures et couleurs: Études sur la symbolique et la sensibilité médiévales*, Léopard d'or, Paris, 1986, p. 108; F. Oppenheimer, *Frankish Themes And Problems*, Faber & Faber, London, 1952, pp. 208-9.

⁵ On the early Christian art and symbolism in Rome, see G.S. Athnos, *The Art of the Roman Catacombs: Themes of Deliverance in the Age of Persecution*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, 2023, pp. 21-129; J.S. Northcote, *The Roman Catacombs: A History of the Christian City beneath Pagan Rome*, Sophia Institute Press, Manchester, 2017, pp. 59-99.

⁶ On the characteristics of the Lombard iconography and symbolism, see A.K. Porter, *Lombard Architecture*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1917, pp. 319-43.

explore the evolution of the lily motif in Christian art and literature, ultimately tracing its transformation into a royal symbol. I argue that the adoption of the fleur-de-lis into Frankish art and literature was initiated by the Carolingian conquest of Italy, where the influences of Lombard and Byzantine iconography played a significant part. Moreover, while the fleur-de-lis was adopted by the early Carolingians due to its religious value and significance, its evolution into an explicitly royal sign took place during the time of later Carolingian rulers. Taking the appearance of the lilies in Carolingian art and literature into consideration, I argue more specifically that the identification of fleur-de-lis as a symbol of royalty started during the reign of Emperor Louis the Pious (r. 814-840).

The first section of this article presents an overview of the biblical and historical context of the fleur-de-lis, illustrating the evolution of the lily in early Christian literature and art. Subsequently, an introduction to the fleur-de-lis in late Roman iconography is provided, with a particular focus on its earliest appearances as a mural pattern. The following section focuses on the association of lily motifs with significant religious figures in early Byzantine art, examining both central and peripheral regions of the empire. In the third section, I examine the evolution of the fleur-de-lis in Lombard art, focusing on its development in the context of the so-called Liutpranden Renaissance. The following section examines the transmission of the fleur-de-lis from Lombard art into Carolingian iconography as a religious motif. In addition, an investigation of the lily in Carolingian texts is conducted to identify its various connotations. The evolution of the fleur-de-lis from a religious symbol to one of royalty in the Carolingian visual arts is then traced. Finally, the lily and its subsequent associations with royalty in Carolingian poetry are discussed before the article concludes.

Theological and Artistic Contexts of the Fleur-de-lis in Early Christian Culture

Before fleur-de-lis was adopted by Carolingians, it had long been regarded as a divine flower in Christianity⁷. The symbolic roots of the lily can be traced back to the Old Testament where it appeared as a symbol of devotion and purity in the Song of Songs 2: 'I am the flower

⁷ L. Impelluso, S. Sartarelli, P. Getty, *Nature and Its Symbols*, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2004, pp. 79-80. For the lily and other flowers in medieval iconography, see C. Fisher, *Flowers and Plants, the Living Iconography*, in C. Hourihane (edited by), *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*, Routledge, New York, 2017, pp. 453-63.

of the field, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.... My beloved to me, and I to him who feedeth among the lilies⁸. In parallel, the lily functioned as a symbol of beauty in the Song of Solomon: 'His cheeks are like beds of spice, mounds of perfume. His lips are lilies, dripping with flowing myrrh⁹. In the Book of Sirach, the lily's qualities such as sweet scent and flowering are praised: 'Send forth flowers, as the lily, and yield a smell, and bring forth leaves in grace, and praise with canticles, and bless the Lord in his works¹⁰. Similar references are made to its uniqueness in the New Testament as well, in the Gospel of Luke and Matthew: 'Consider the lilies, how they grow: they labour not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these.'; and for raiment why are you solicitous? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they labour not, neither do they spin¹¹. The beauty, sweetness, and uniqueness of the flower are thus highlighted in these biblical passages whose concepts are later expanded upon in late antique artworks and poetic texts.

In symbolism, the origins of fleur-de-lis extend back to the iconography of antiquity. Throughout the antique period the stylized lily had been a common artistic theme that appeared on various objects found in different areas¹². Although the symbolic meaning of this flower varied from one culture to another, the stylized figure was used as an ornamental theme or as an emblematic sign in many ancient societies, such as in the cases of the Mesopotamian cylinders and the Egyptian bas-reliefs as well as the Mycenaean pottery¹³. The use of this stylized motif, on the other hand, increasingly became popular with the development of Christian art. Though it was rarely included

⁸ Song of Songs 2:1-2, 16: «Ego flos campi, et lilium convallium. Sicut lilium inter spinas, sic amica mea inter filias ... Dilectus meus mihi, et ego illi, qui pascitur inter lilia». All biblical passages in Latin are taken from the Vulgate and the English versions are taken from the Douay-Reims translation. For the biblical tradition of the lily, see the summary in C. Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology* cit., pp. 204-5.

⁹ Song of Solomon 5:13: 'Labia eius lilia, distillantia murrum primam'.

¹⁰ Ecclesiasticus 39:19: «Florete flores quasi lilium: et date odorem, et frondete in gratiam: et collaudate canticum, et benedicite Dominum in operibus suis».

¹¹ Luke 12:27: «Considerate lilia quomodo crescunt: non laborant, neque nent: dico autem vobis, nec Salomon in omni gloria sua vestiebatur sicut unum ex istis»; and Matthew 6:28-9: 'Et de vestimento quid solliciti estis? Considerate lilia agri quomodo crescunt: non laborant, neque nent. Dico autem vobis, quoniam nec Salomon in omni gloria sua coopertus est sicut unum ex istis».

¹² R. Kandeler, W.R. Ullrich, *Symbolism of Plants: Examples from European-Mediterranean Culture Presented with Biology and History of Art. June: Lilies*, «Journal of Experimental Botany», 60:7 (2009), pp. 1893-95.

¹³ M. Pastoureau, *Une histoire symbolique du Moyen Age occidental* Seuil, Paris, 2004, pp. 96-97.

in the earliest artistic works, one of the first appearances of the lily in Christian iconography can be traced back to as early as the third century. This example of an early form of the lily motif is a bronze object from a horse harness found in the Dura-Europos house church in Syria, which is one of the earliest known Christian churches (fig. 1). Arranged in the form of a rosette, the object contains lilies at the ends of an x-shaped design that converges in the center¹⁴.



Fig. 1 – A Bronze Cheekpiece from a Horse Harness. Excavated at Dura-Europos, Syria, 3rd century.

Image: L.R. Brody, G.L. Hoffman, *Roman in the Provinces: Art on the Periphery of Empire*, McMullen Museum of Art, Chestnut Hill, 2014, p. 269.

The appearance of the fleur-de-lis symbol on wall paintings can also be traced back to the early Christian era, during which the motif was employed as an ornamental element in the paintings found in Roman catacombs. Beginning in the late antique period, these catacombs – which are highly significant for the history of Early Christian art – contain the great majority of examples from before about 400, generally in form of frescoes. In spite of its very early form, the motif appears in some of the depictions featuring

¹⁴ For the object found in Dura-Europos, Syria, see L.R. Brody, G.L. Hoffman, *Roman in the Provinces: Art on the Periphery of Empire*, McMullen Museum of Art, Chestnut Hill, 2014, p. 269.

the miracles of Jesus and scenes from the Old and New Testaments¹⁵. With the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire in the late fourth century, on the other hand, the three-petal lilies became one of the important elements of decoration in the new basilicas constructed in various cities. However, it took time for Roman religious iconography to fully develop. Unlike the simple decorations found in the catacombs and smaller ancient churches, the early basilicas were surrounded with large walls and apses for elaborate mural decorations. Accordingly, the motif appeared on the several mosaics in the fifth-century buildings located in different cities such as Thessaloniki, Ohrid as well as Ravenna¹⁶. These mosaics, often portraying settings from the New Testament – including typically the apostles, evangelists, saints and martyrs – decorated with an early form of the fleur-de-lis figure. As the Christian iconography gained its sophistication, therefore, the use of three-petal lily motif gradually developed into a common figure in the different parts of the empire, inspiring the later works of Byzantine art with its religious associations.

¹⁵ Especially the Catacombs of Domitilla and the Catacombs of Saint Callixtus. On the iconography of Roman catacombs, see L.V. Rutgers, *Subterranean Rome: In Search of the Roots of Christianity in the Catacombs of the Eternal City*, Peeters, Leuven, 2000, pp. 87-91.

¹⁶ On the mosaics of Saint George Rotunda in Thessaloniki, see B. Küllerich, H. Torp, *The Rotunda in Thessaloniki and Its Mosaics*, Kapon Editions, Athens, 2016; for the lily figures in the ceiling mosaics, see [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Mosaics_in_Saint_George_Rotunda_\(Thessaloniki\)#/media/File:CE%98%CE%B5%CF%83%CF%83%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%BD%CE%AF%CE%BA%CE%B7_-_%CE%A1%CE%BF%CF%84%CF%8C%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B1_0906.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Mosaics_in_Saint_George_Rotunda_(Thessaloniki)#/media/File:CE%98%CE%B5%CF%83%CF%83%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%BD%CE%AF%CE%BA%CE%B7_-_%CE%A1%CE%BF%CF%84%CF%8C%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B1_0906.jpg), accessed April 12, 2024. For the lily mosaics in the Church of the Acheiropietos, Thessaloniki, see B. Fourlas, *Die Mosaiken der Acheiropietos-Basilika in Thessaloniki: Eine vergleichende Analyse dekorativer Mosaiken des 5. und 6. Jahrhunderts*, De Gruyter, Boston, 2012, fig. 122. On the mosaics of Plaošnik Basilica, Ohrid, see M. Tutkovski, *The Symbolic Messages of the Mosaics in the Southern Basilica at Plaošnik in Ohrid*, in *International Symposium of Byzantologists NIS and BYZANTIUM XIII*, NKC, Niš, 2014, pp. 129-42; for the lily mosaic, see [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Plao%C5%A1nik_Basilica_\(Ohrid\)_-_Mosaics#/media/File:Ohrid_Plao%C5%A1nik_Basilika_2_-_Mosaik_1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Plao%C5%A1nik_Basilica_(Ohrid)_-_Mosaics#/media/File:Ohrid_Plao%C5%A1nik_Basilika_2_-_Mosaik_1.jpg), accessed April 12, 2024. On the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, see G.V. Mackie, *Early Christian Chapels in the West: Decoration, Function and Patronage*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2003. For the lily motifs on the Chi-Ro mosaic, see [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Mausoleum_of_Galla_Placidia_\(Ravenna\)_-_Dome_interior#/media/File:Ravenna_Mausoleo_della_Galla_Placidia_Interno_Traversata_Arco_4.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Mausoleum_of_Galla_Placidia_(Ravenna)_-_Dome_interior#/media/File:Ravenna_Mausoleo_della_Galla_Placidia_Interno_Traversata_Arco_4.jpg), accessed April 12, 2024.

Visual Representations of the Fleur-de-lis in Early Byzantine Iconography

As the sixth century saw a massive building project of churches, the fleur-de-lis evolved into one of the most popular decoration elements in Byzantine art¹⁷. The motif was mainly featured on bas-relief sculpture, mosaics depicting religious subjects in the interior of the churches, and occasionally the objects used for religious purposes. During this period, the stylized lily emerged in numerous stone works as an ornamental motif in the early Byzantine architecture. These early decorative examples include the lily motifs in the form of stone carvings on marble bas-reliefs, dating back to the sixth century. In these reliefs, the lily figures, which were carved on the large plates located in the interior of the churches, decorate the edges of geometric patterns, and in some cases included with a cross in the middle. As a common exemplar of religious art, such reliefs appeared in both the central and peripheral regions of the empire. Although the cross motifs are included occasionally, the lily figures appear as a common decorative pattern in the reliefs in the churches located in present day Istanbul, Bursa, Çanakkale and Ravenna¹⁸.

In addition to the reliefs, there is also evidence of the use of the fleur-de-lis motifs on the religiously significant artifacts. In one of these early objects produced as pilgrimage relics from the Holy Land, flower figures are typically placed between religious scenes. Among the objects, a particular ampulla from the Bobbio treasure in northern Italy, depicts biblical scenes set in nine consecutive medallions. In this artifact, dating to the sixth century, the central medallion uses a larger

¹⁷ For a detailed survey of Justinian's building program focused on the center and the periphery in the sixth century, see R.G. Ousterhout, *Ten Justinian's Building Program and Sixth-Century Developments*, in *Eastern Medieval Architecture: The Building Traditions of Byzantium and Neighboring Lands*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2019, pp. 218-42.

¹⁸ For the marble bas-relief in Hagia Sophia, Istanbul see C. Barsanti, A. Guiglia, *The Sculptures of the Ayasofya Müzesi in Istanbul*, Ege Yayınları, Istanbul, 2010, pp. 113, For the bas-reliefs in the Fatih Mosque, Bursa (formerly known as the Church of Saint Stephen at Trigleia), see S.Y. Ötügen, *Forschungen Im Nord-westlichen Kleinasien: Antike Und Byzantinische Denkmäler in Der Provinz Bursa*, E. Wasmuth, Tübingen, 1996, pp. 101-5, for more information on the building, see C. Mango, I. Ševčenko, *Some Churches and Monasteries on the South Shore of the Sea of Marmara*, «Dumbarton Oaks Papers» 27 (1973), pp. 235-77, at p. 236. For the reliefs in the Murat Hüdavendigâr Mosque, Çanakkale, see A.Ç. Türker, *Byzantine Architectural Sculpture in Çanakkale*, Bilgin Kültür Sanat, Ankara, 2018, p. 158. For the reliefs in the Basilica of Saint Clement in Rome, see, F. Guidobaldi, C. Barsanti, A.G. Guidobaldi, *San Clemente: La Scultura Del VI Secolo*, Collegio San Clemente, Roma, 1992, pp. 85-92.

area to represent the Ascension of Jesus in a setting that takes the last place in the cycle. The other scenes alternating from left to right, and from top to bottom, are the Annunciation, the Visitation, the birth of Jesus, the Baptism, the Adoration of the Shepherds and the Adoration of the Magi. The other two unseen scenes are thought to be the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus by comparing them with examples with similar compositions¹⁹. Between the central medallion and the medallions bordering these scenes are the fleurs-de-lis. This series of artifacts is preserved in the church of Bobbio are thought to be donations dating back to the reign of the Lombard Queen Theolinde (591-616), along with other similar fragments in the treasures of Monza. These are considered to be gifts sent by Pope Gregory I for the baptism ceremony of the Lombard Queen Theodolinde's son in 603²⁰. Such examples originated in the East are important items not only because of they demonstrate the development of religious ceremonies but locate the fleur-de-lis within biblical settings, which was a common artistic tradition at the time.

Around the same period, the use of the fleur-de-lis in Christian mosaic art also spread across the several churches throughout the Empire. Characterized by vibrant and creative designs, rich colors, and a sense of depth, these mosaics are known as the jeweled style in Late Antiquity, that is distinguished by its polychromatic colors and shapes, as well as the geometric patterns²¹. Adorning the illustrations of religious figures portrayed by these mosaics, the lilies commonly emerged as a natural pattern on the interior decorations of the churches. Built on the order of Justinian I between 548 and 565, for instance, the mosaics of Saint Catherine's Monastery in Sinai contain the portraits of religious figures adorned by the lily motifs²². In the eastern apse mosaic of the basilica picturing the Transfiguration, Jesus is depicted in the center, surrounded by the prophets Moses and Elias, while the Apostles Peter, James, and John lie on the ground and overwhelmed by the brightness of the revelation. Ranged above the Transfiguration mosaic, the medallions of apostles are located and

¹⁹ For the specific ampulla known as 'Bobbio 19', see A. Grabar, *Ampoules de Terre Saint (Monza/Bobbio)*, Klincksieck, Paris, 1958, pp. 41-43.

²⁰ A. Filipová, *On the Origins of the Monza Collection of Holy Land Ampullae: The Legend of Gregory the Great's Gift of Relics to Theodelinda Reconsidered*, «Arte Lombarda», 173-174 (2015), pp. 5-16.

²¹ M. Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1989, pp. 66-121.

²² J. Leroy, *Monks and Monasteries of the near East*, Gorgias Press, Piscataway, 2004, pp. 93-94.

ranged below, are those of prophets., the lily figures are placed as a decoration among the medallions of the prophets²³.

In a similar fashion, the lily motifs were featured in the fragmentary apse mosaics of the sixth-century Basilica of Panagia Aggeloktisti in Cyprus²⁴. As Megaw suggested, the mosaic picturing the Mary and Child flanked by Archangels Michael and Gabriel features compatibility with that of Sinai in terms of demonstration²⁵. She also noted that the faces in the mosaic display a distinct precision and delicacy, similar to the technique used on the faces of Saint Vitale in Ravenna, which is another sixth-century work²⁶. In spite of the similarities in technique, the focal point of the mosaic in the church of San Vitale, however, is a portrayal of young Jesus, seated on a blue globe and clothed in purple, with angels on either side. He extends the martyr's crown to Saint Vitale with his right hand, while Bishop Ecclesius, serving as the symbolic donor of the church, presents a model of the basilica with his left hand. The lily figures on the ground, are applied in a similar fashion to those of Saint Apollinare²⁷. These examples from different parts of the Empire demonstrate that the lilies were regarded as sacred flowers not only since they accompany the illustrations of divine figures such as Jesus, Mary, the evangelists and saints but also due to their appearances in mosaic and sculpture decorating the sections of those churches. Although several religious figures were removed from the buildings particularly in those of the central provinces, during the periods of Iconoclasm, the lily motifs largely survived as one of the main aspects of Byzantine religious iconography. Apart from their naturalistic appearances in the peripheral regions, however, it is still possible to see other decorative examples in early period mosaics in the Hagia Sophia. Some of the figures excluding the human illustrations, are preserved, as seen in the different parts of the church. Mango and Hawkins suggested that

²³ For the apse mosaic of Saint Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, see J. Elsner, *Encounter: The Mosaics in the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai*, «Gesta», 55:1 (2016), pp. 1-3, at p. 3. <https://doi.org/10.1086/684414>.

²⁴ For the mosaic of Mary and Child decorated with the lily motifs, see J.P. Caillet, *I mosaici delle chiese dell'Alto Adriatico (epertorio ornamentale, epigrafia) al confronto di quelli dell'Oriente Mediterraneo: analogie e specificità*, «Antichità Altoadriatiche» (2017), pp. 129-52, fig. 8.

²⁵ On the apse mosaic of Mary and Child, see A.H.S. Megaw, *Byzantine Architecture and Decoration in Cyprus: Metropolitan or Provincial?*, «Dumbarton Oaks Papers», 28 (1974), pp. 57-88, at p. 73.

²⁶ A.H.S. Megaw, *Byzantine Architecture* cit., p. 75.

²⁷ J.R. Benton, *Materials, Methods, and Masterpieces of Medieval Art*, Praeger, Santa Barbara, 2009, p. 81. For the apse mosaic of San Vitale in Ravenna, see L. Liu, *San Vitale Apse: A Holistic Consideration*, in *Proceedings of the 2022 3rd International Conference on Language, Art and Cultural Exchange*, Atlantis Press, Dordrecht 2023, pp. 571-79, fig. 6.

the geometric borders containing such figures date from the reign of Justinian, and resemble those of pre-iconoclastic patterns appeared in the apse of the Dormition church at Nicaea²⁸.

As such, the fleur-de-lis as an iconographic element developed into a highly popular motif in the sixth-century Byzantine art, particularly in the form of mosaic decoration, adorning the scenes of religious figures. Both as a pattern and figurative motif, lilies appeared in the separate parts of the empire, showing resemblances in terms of shape and form. While this decoration element was potentially more common in the sixth century, the iconoclast movements of the eighth and ninth centuries resulted in destruction of several church decorations depicting human figures. Even though such images are largely preserved in the peripheral regions where the imperial authority was loosely established such as Italy, Dalmatia, Cyprus and the southern coast of Anatolia, this removal of the mosaics as an imperial policy, mostly took place in the central regions where the imperial authority was strongly established such as Thrace, Isauria, Chaldia and Cappadocia²⁹. Iconoclasm thus affected several churches including the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, in which the current mosaics that include the human figures mostly survive from the post-iconoclasm Period³⁰. Although several mosaics were damaged as a result of this movement, especially in the peripheral regions, the fleur-de-lis remained as one of the principal motifs decorating the religious scenes, which reveals an understanding about the meanings attributed to symbol in the Christianity.

During the sixth century, the fleur-de-lis also appeared quite frequently in churches Ravenna more than any other location. As one of the key cities reclaimed in 540 during the reign of Justinian, Ravenna became the seat of the Byzantine governor of Italy, before undergoing large building programs of churches³¹. Therefore, the churches in Ravenna were decorated with sophisticated mosaics as a result of this

²⁸ For the lily motifs in the mosaics of Hagia Sophia from pre-Iconoclasm period, see C. Mango and E.J.W. Hawkins, *The Apsse Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul. Report on Work Carried out in 1964*, «Dumbarton Oaks Papers», 19 (1965), pp. 115-51, fig. 55.

²⁹ J.S. Codoñer, *The Emperor Theophilos and the East, 829-842: Court and Frontier in Byzantium during the Last Phase of Iconoclasm*, Routledge, New York, 2016, pp. 20-21.

³⁰ N.E. Geyik, *Iconoclasm Period in Byzantine History and the Effect of Iconoclasm on Hagia Sophia*, «International Journal of Social, Political and Economic Research», 7:3 (2020), pp. 575-90, at p. 576.

³¹ K.G. Holm, *The Classical City in the Sixth Century* in Michael Maas (edited by) *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2005, p. 99.

flourishing development and material prosperity. Similarly with the mosaics in other sixth-century churches, the fleur-de-lis motifs in those of Ravenna adorned the scenes and portraits of important Christian figures.

One of the earliest appearances of the lily motif in Ravenna was a sixth-century mosaic in the Archbishop's Chapel which a clean-shaven Jesus is pictured in military uniform with a cross-halo. Portraying Christ treading on the beasts, the setting depicts Jesus frontally, stepping on a lion and a snake, and dressed in armor and a purple cloak while holding an open Gospel and a large cross³². Along with abstract natural patterns, the lily motifs decorate the vault of the narrow corridor.

Another notable sixth-century Ravenna building that includes lily figures is the Basilica of Saint Apollinare in Classe. Portraying the Transfiguration of Jesus, in the upper area of the mosaics of the apse with a semi-dome, a large disk encloses a starry sky in which a jeweled cross stands out, with the face of Christ inside a circular medallion³³. In the lower part, a green, flowery valley opens up, with rocks, bushes, plants and birds. In the center, the figure of Saint Apollinaris, the first bishop of Ravenna, stands with his arms open in a praying attitude. Surrounded by twelve white lambs representing the apostles, he is standing on a ground decorated with clusters of white lilies³⁴.

In parallel, the New Basilica of Saint Apollinare in Ravenna illustrates scenes from the life of Jesus as well as prophets and evangelists³⁵. Reconsecrated in 561 under Justinian I, the church contains large mosaics. On the panorama of the left lateral wall mosaics, twenty-two Virgins led by the Three Magi, moving towards the Virgin Mary and Child surrounded by four angels. On the panorama of the right lateral wall mosaics, twenty-six Martyrs, led by Saint Martin and Saint Apollinaris, moving towards a group representing Christ enthroned alongside four angels. Both mosaics on the left and right are decorated with the lily flowers on the ground, demonstrating a high resemblance with those of Basilica of Saint Apollinare. Moreover, the throne of Jesus on the right was also adorned with the lily figures, displaying an unusual use of the motif (fig. 2).

³² F. Van Der Meer, *Early Christian Art Translated by Peter and Friedl Brown*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1967, p. 121.

³³ T. Velmans, V. Korać, M. Šuput, *Rayonnement de Byzance*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1999, p. 16.

³⁴ For the mosaic of Saint Apollinaris and the lilies, see Wikimedia.org, 2021, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2d/VTYU_Basilica_di_Sant_Apollinare_-_Ravenna.jpg.

³⁵ G. Bovini, *Ravenna Art and History*, Longo Publisher, Ravenna, 2006, p. 72.



Fig. 2 – The Mosaic of Christ and Angels. The New Basilica of Saint Apollinaris, Ravenna, Italy, 6th century. Image: Wikimedia Commons, by José Luiz Bernardes Ribeiro.

Therefore, the fleur-de-lis in early Christianity gradually transformed into a highly popular motif in sixth-century Byzantine art. The use of this motif in art, which was especially well preserved in the peripheral provinces of the Empire such as Italy, would be continued by post-Byzantine societies in the region. The Lombard kingdom, which expanded its holdings in the peninsula from the late sixth century onwards, would play a major role in ensuring this continuity.

The Fleur-de-lis and its Development in Lombard Art

Recognizing the fleur-de-lis as a divine flower in Christian iconography is important. Its use in most contexts signified the devotion to the religious figures and values. From the sixth century onwards, lily motifs became more common in many parts of the Empire, especially in Italy. The Byzantine mosaics and sculpture, however, were not the only Christian artworks to incorporate the lily during this period. The fleur-de-lis also appeared in the Lombard-controlled parts of Italy as early as the late sixth and early seventh centuries. After settling in Pannonia for forty-two years, the Lombards arrived in Italy around

568 led by King Alboin³⁶. Being a nomadic population, one of the most well-developed artistic expression the Lombards transferred into Italy was largely goldsmithery. These artworks included earrings, scabbard trimmings made of open-worked gold foil of scramasaxes (the typical Lombard short sword with a single edge), saddle trimmings, binding plates, and reliquaries³⁷. Following the invasion of Italy, the traditional Germanic bracteates in particular were gradually replaced by small crosses used as amulets. Newly produced embossed gold foil crosses featured naturalistic decorations, with stylized animals and plants. Along with the unique naturalistic patterns, the gold crosses occasionally included lily figures, demonstrating a similarity with the Christian and Byzantine iconographic tradition. During the seventh century, goldsmithing continued to be the leading art, and in addition to simple crosses, the production of more sophisticated jewels, namely gem-set crosses started. Lombard goldsmithery and craftsmanship, well represented by numerous tomb-finds, in fact demonstrate an evolutionary process. While traditional Germanic elements predominated during the late sixth and early seventh century works, more elegant and light symbolic motifs with Byzantine influences, appear to take over from the mid-seventh century onwards³⁸.

From the beginning of the eighth century, Lombard art experienced a phase of major development, which led to a period referred to by scholars as the Liutprandean Renaissance, thus underlining the revival of models from the Roman era, Byzantine influences and the link between the artistic movement and King Liutprand (r. 712-744)³⁹. This movement, however, largely influenced the architecture and began to distance itself from Germanic decorative traditions by reinterpreting themes from classical and Byzantine iconography⁴⁰.

During the reign of Liutprand, sculpture developed in a unique way as well, incorporating more influences from Classical architecture over time in a trend that involved the blending of various influences and the incorporation of new methods, which is especially noticeable

³⁶ Paul The Deacon, *History of the Lombards*, edited by Edward Peters, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2011, p. 63.

³⁷ P. De Vecchi, E. Cerchiari, *I Longobardi in Italia*, in *L'arte nel tempo*, vol. 1, tomo II, Bompiani, Milano, 1991, pp. 306-308.

³⁸ H. Roth, *Die Ornamentik der Langobarden in Italien; eine Untersuchung zur Stilentwicklung anhand der Grabfunde*, Habelt, Bonn, 1973, pp. 117.

³⁹ D. Dzino, A. Milošević, and T. Vedriš, *A View from the Carolingian Frontier Zone*, in D. Dzino et al., (edited by), *Migration, Integration and Connectivity on the Southeastern Frontier of the Carolingian Empire*, Brill, Leiden, 2018, p. 10.

⁴⁰ F. Betti, *Liutprando*, in *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Medievale VII*, Roma, 1996, pp. 749-753.

in the Oratory of Santa Maria at Cividale del Friuli.⁴¹ Built towards the middle of the eighth century as a monastery chapel, the church features the sculpture of the saints surrounded with floral patterns which represent the meeting point between the Lombard style and the reinterpretation of classical models. Among these floral decorations, the lily motifs were included at the top, placed right above the traditional-style patterns.

The altar of Ratchis, which was dedicated to the Duke of Friuli between 739 and 744 prior to his ascension to the throne of the Lombards, represents one of the more well-preserved examples of Lombard art. While the altar is an important testimony to the Christianization of the Lombard aristocracy of the period, the iconographic repertoire is a traditional one. On the front panel there are four angels holding a mandorla with the portrayal of Christ in Majesty. In the side panels, the Visitation of Mary and the Adoration of the Magi are pictured. The Adoration scene include lilies under the throne of Mary, as a naturalist decoration similar to those in Saint Apollinare (fig. 3). The altar, therefore, is a significant example of Lombard sculpture in terms of the association of lilies with the religious figures such as Jesus, Mary and the Magi.



Fig. 3 – The Adoration of the Magi relief featuring fleur-de-lis motifs, from Cividale del Friuli, Italy ca. 739–744.
Image: Wikimedia Commons, by Rollrobooter.

⁴¹ P. De Vecchi, *I Longobardi* cit., pp. 309-314.

In another bas-relief demonstrating the association of the fleur-de-lis motif with Christian figures, Christian and Germanic elements are combined. Demonstrated on the base panels of the Baptistry of Saint Callisto from Cividale (730-756), the sculpture shows the symbols of the four Evangelists: Matthew as an angel, Mark as a lion, Luke as an ox, and John as an eagle in the four corners⁴². Surrounded by griffons and birds, the lily is placed on the top of a plant, presumably symbolizing the biblical tree of life. This relief is notable since the lily motif is included on the same portrayal with the symbols of the four Evangelists, representing a continuation with the Byzantine iconography.

The fourth and final avatar of the Lombard sculpture is a mid-eighth-century marble bas-relief⁴³. Known as the Plutei of Theodota, this particular artwork from the oratory of San Michele alla Pusterla in Pavia was also produced during the Liutprandean Renaissance⁴⁴. Having naturalistic motifs, the relief represents two peacocks drinking from a fountain surmounted by a cross⁴⁵. While the peacock on the left is decorated with the symbols derived from the early Lombard motifs, the peacock on the right is accompanied by lilies, also in compliance with the original Lombard style. Like the marble reliefs in the church of Saint Clement, this depiction is important due to its association between the cross and lily, attributing a religious significance to the symbol.

In this light, as a nomadic and warrior people, the early Lombards do not appear to have been interested in dedicating themselves to the development of artistic techniques that required a permanent settlement and the use of materials that were difficult to transport. In their tombs we find almost only weapons and jewels, which represent the essence of artistic creation materially executed by Lombard craftsmen⁴⁶. The circumstances underwent a transformation with their definitive settlement in Italy, where the Lombards encountered the influence of classical traditions and potentially engaged the services of Romanesque artisans and Byzantine artists. Nevertheless, the outcome was a synthesis of artistic production that manifested a multitude of original characteristics during the Lombard era across the entire peninsula⁴⁷. This artistic development peaked during the

⁴² L. Chinellato, *I marmi altomedievali del Museo Cristiano di Cividale del Friuli. Dai caratteri del rilievo alla committenza* in M. Cepetić, D. Dujmović, V. Jukić, A. Nikoloska (edited by), *Art History - the Future is Now. Studies in Honor of Professor Vladimir P. Goss*, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Rijeka, 2012, p. 278.

⁴³ Paolo Diacono, *Storia Dei Longobardi*, edited by L. Capo, Lorenzo Valla/Mondadori, Milano, 1992, pp. 556-57.

⁴⁴ P. De Vecchi, *I Longobardi* cit., pp. 305-317.

⁴⁵ Ivi, p. 311.

⁴⁶ S. Rovagnati, *I Longobardi*, Xenia, Milano, 2003, p. 105.

⁴⁷ P. De Vecchi, *I Longobardi* cit., p. 314.

Liutprandean Renaissance, which influenced the later artworks of their successors in the south⁴⁸. Charlemagne's conquest in 774, however, put an end to the progress of Lombard architecture in northern Italy. Without the political power, the development of Lombard art is also disrupted in the last quarter of the eighth century. In a short period, however, elements of Lombard art were introduced into the art of 'Carolingian Renaissance' mainly from northern Italy⁴⁹.

The Incorporation and Evolution of the Fleur-de-lis in Carolingian Culture

From the late eighth century onwards, representation of religious motifs with the divine figures of Christianity, continued in the Frankish artworks. The Carolingian dynasty, who had assumed the kingdom of the Franks under Pepin the Short in 751, pioneered several political and social changes throughout Western Europe, leaving their impact on the cultural developments as well⁵⁰. Taking inspiration from Byzantine and Lombard culture, particularly the reign of Charlemagne (r. 768-814) and Louis the Pious (r. 814-840) witnessed an era of cultural activity in the Carolingian Empire. During this period, which is also known as the Carolingian Renaissance, the production of visual arts, literary works and written compositions increased along with the architecture⁵¹.

This development of Frankish art and architecture during the Carolingian Renaissance is notable. Although the Frankish territories had experienced certain developments in religious construction under Merovingian rule (481-754), sculpture was characterized by a simplification of antique forms and developed basic techniques merely for decorating sarcophagi, altar tables or ecclesiastical furniture⁵². In parallel to the

⁴⁸ Ivi, p. 312.

⁴⁹ N. Budak, *Carolingian Renaissance or Renaissance of the 9th Century on the Eastern Adriatic?*, in D. Dzino, A. Milošević, and T. Vedriš (edited by), *Migration, Integration and Connectivity on the Southeastern Frontier of the Carolingian Empire*, Brill, Leiden, 2018, pp. 32-39, at p. 39.

⁵⁰ On the cultural developments during the Carolingian Renaissance, see G. Brown, *Introduction: The Carolingian Renaissance*, in R. McKitterick (edited by), *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 1-51; J. Contreni, *The Carolingian Renaissance: Education and Literary Culture*, in R. McKitterick (edited by), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 709-57; R. McKitterick, *The Carolingian Renaissance of Culture and Learning* in J. Story (edited by), *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2005, pp. 151-66.

⁵¹ F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, pp. 290-291.

⁵² E. Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire Raisonné de l'Architecture Française Du XIe Au XVIe Siècle vol. VIII*, Morel, Paris, 1858, p. 104. For a recent research on the

early Lombard art, however, goldsmithery held an important place in Merovingian art, which also combined elements of Germanic animal-style decoration with Late Antique designs. The sophistication of Classical art forms and styles used by the Carolingians, on the other hand, enabled artworks to depict the figures and narrate the events in a more effective way than ornamental Germanic period art was incapable of⁵³.

As part of this artistic revival, Carolingian architecture developed a unique style by borrowing heavily from Early Christian and Byzantine architecture and adding innovations of its own⁵⁴. Moreover, sculpture flourished combining both elements in a sophisticated way, influenced by the earlier Roman and Byzantine works. Such influence is seen especially in the crypt of Saint-Denis Church, Paris, which was one of the earliest projects of the Carolingian architecture. During his second coronation at Saint-Denis in 754, Pepin the Short had promised that he would have the old abbey rebuilt⁵⁵. To fulfill this, he commissioned his representative Abbot Fulrad who later made several trips to Rome to draw inspiration for the remodeling. Taking the basilicas in Rome as a model, particularly those of Old St. Peter, the reconstruction was eventually started after Pepin's death in 768 and was completed in 775, during reign of Charlemagne⁵⁶.

The rebuilt church had a small transept, short apse, marble columns and adorned capitals that contain several classicized elements, including fleur-de-lis motifs⁵⁷. Insofar as the church was modeled after the basilicas in Rome, it has been suggested that the sculptors were

continuity of classical architecture in Merovingian period, see P. Chevalier, *30 Merovingian Religious Architecture: Some New Reflections*, in B. Effros, I. Moreira (edited by), *The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2020, pp. 657-92.

⁵³ E. Kitzinger, *Early Medieval Art in the British Museum & British Library*, British Museum, London, 1955, pp. 40-42.

⁵⁴ N.F. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages: A Completely Revised and Expanded Edition of Medieval History, the Life and Death of a Civilization*, Harper-Collins, New York, 1993, p. 190.

⁵⁵ P. Plagnieux, *La basilique cathédrale de Saint-Denis*, Éditions du Patrimoine, Paris, 2012, p. 3.

⁵⁶ J. Emerick, *Focusing on the Celebrant: The Column Display inside Santa Prassede, Rome*, «Mededelingen van Hets Nederlands Instituut Te Rome» 59 (2001), pp. 129-59, at p. 140; J. Emerick, *Building more Romano in Francia during the third quarter of the eighth Century: the abbey church of Saint-Denis and its model*, in C. Bolgia, R. McKitterick, J. Osborne (edited by), *Rome across Time and Space: Cultural Transmission and the Exchange of Ideas, c.500-1400*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 127-50, at p. 141.

⁵⁷ For the fleur-de-lis figures in the crypt of St. Denis, see M. Jurković, *Quelques réflexions sur la basilique Carolingienne de Saint-Denis: une oeuvre d'esprit paléochrétien*, in D. Poirel (edited by), *Rencontres Médiévales Européennes*, Brepols, Turnhout, 2001, pp. 37-57, fig. 3, 8 and 9.

inspired by Lombard «aulic» art, which flourished across Northern Italy from the beginning of the second half of the eighth century, that is during the Liutprandean Renaissance⁵⁸. Considering the church was rebuilt sometime between 768 and 775, which coincides with the early years of Charlemagne's reign, the lily motif — as a popular decoration element of the Lombard sculpture — was potentially incorporated into the Carolingian art during this period. This, in fact, demonstrates a compatibility with the *renovatio* movement of Frankish architecture under Charlemagne, in which he sponsored a Christian order in ceremonial architecture as part of his political program⁵⁹. Given that Fulrad was already familiar with Lombard sculpture at this point, which he alternatively may have observed during his visit to various Lombard cities after the Peace of Pavia in 756, it seems possible that the integration of the fleur-de-lis took place through Lombard aulic art sometime during the first seven years of Charlemagne's reign⁶⁰. On the other hand, it is clear that the fleur-de-lis was incorporated into the Carolingian art initially as a motif with strong religious associations, in parallel to the earlier Byzantine and Lombard works of art.

In a later example of Carolingian sculpture, fleur-de-lis figures are seen as a sarcophagus decoration in the crypt beneath the Jouarre Abbey⁶¹. Originally built during the Merovingian period around 630, the crypt contains a number of burials in sarcophagi including those of Saint Agilbert, the Bishop of Paris (c. 667–680) and his sisters St. Theodechilde (d. 655), and St. Agilberta (d. 680), the first and second abbesses of the Jouarre⁶². While the sarcophagus of Agilbert was carved with a tableau of the Last Judgment and Christ in Majesty, the fleur-de-lis figures are seen on the front part of the sarcophagus of Agilberta, an unusual motif for the Merovingian period⁶³. Although it has been argued that these fleur-de-lis carvings were derived from Persian motifs in the late seventh century, the artworks on the sarcophagi seem rather to have been executed during Carolingian era⁶⁴. Given

⁵⁸ M. Jurković, *Quelques réflexions* cit., p. 51.

⁵⁹ J. Emerick, *Focusing on the Celebrant* cit., p. 140.

⁶⁰ On Fulrad's visit to the Lombard cities in 756, see C.E. Bowers, *Pepin, Power and the Papacy: The True First Holy Roman Emperor*, «The Histories», 4:2 (2019), pp. 13-20, at p. 16.

⁶¹ M. De Maillé, *Les crypts of Jouarre*, Picard, Paris, 1971, pp. 246-250.

⁶² R. Bernheimer, *A Sasanian Monument in Merovingian France*, «Ars Islamica», 5:2 (1938), 221-32, at p. 222.

⁶³ For the fleur-de-lis motifs on the sarcophagus of Agilberta, see R. Bernheimer, *A Sasanian Monument in Merovingian France* cit., p. 227, fig. 6.

⁶⁴ For the works that considered that the fleur-de-lis was originally derived from a Sassanid motif, see R. Bernheimer, *A Sasanian Monument in Merovingian France* cit., pp. 221-32; M. De Maillé, *Les crypts of Jouarre* cit., pp. 246-250. For the

that the abbey was restored under Abbes Ermentrude (d. 869) during the second decade of the ninth century, when the sarcophagi of Theodechilde and Agilberta were re-positioned in the right and left sections of the crypt, it is possible that the fleur-de-lis motifs were also added during this restoration⁶⁵. Therefore, the sarcophagus in its final form may date to the second quarter of the ninth century⁶⁶. The fleur-de-lis motifs, on the other hand, show strong parallels with those of Lombard sculpture in Northern Italy, demonstrating the characteristics of late Lombard aulic tradition. Taking the ongoing cultural exchange between the Francia and Northern Italy in the ninth century into consideration, it seems plausible that the Carolingians are primarily influenced by the Lombard artworks rather than those of Persians⁶⁷. In any case, the inclusion of the fleur-de-lis on the tomb of a holy figure, indicates that the religious significance of the symbol continued during the second half of the ninth century.

The textual evidence from the Carolingian period also highlights the importance of the fleur-de-lis in the Frankish society, often praising its floral qualities and medicinal value. Composed sometime in the late eighth or early ninth century, the *Capitulare de villis*, for instance, contains a set of guidelines for governing the property and assets of the king, covering aspects such as land management, animal care, justice, and general administration⁶⁸. In chapter 70, the text includes a list of plants and herbs recommended for cultivation in the agricultural holdings across the empire, mainly for medication purposes and preventing diseases. The section starting with the phrase *Volumus quod in horto omnes herbas habeant* ('We want that in the garden they have all sorts of plants'), comprises ninety plants which are exclusively medicinal. Although the list does not appear to be ordered in any particular manner, the prominence afforded to the term 'lilum' (lily) at the beginning of the list suggests that this plant was regarded as being of greater value and importance than any other on the list. Since the text

critics, see A. Erlande-Brandenburg, *Marquise de Maillé. Les cryptes de Jouarre*, «Bulletin Monumental», 131 (1973), pp. 178-82; W.E. Kleinbauer, *Review of Les cryptes de Jouarre*, «Speculum», 51 (1976), pp. 118-20. Erlande-Brandenburg and Kleinbauer suggested that the motif was added during the Carolingian period.

⁶⁵ On the restoration of the abbey during the Carolingian period, see A. Erlande-Brandenburg, *Les cryptes de Jouarre* cit., p. 182; W.E. Kleinbauer, *Review of Les cryptes de Jouarre* cit., p. 119.

⁶⁶ On the dating of the sarcophagus of Agilberta, see M. De Maillé, *Les cryptes of Jouarre* cit., pp. 246-250.

⁶⁷ On the cultural exchange between the Carolingians and Lombards, see D. Dzino, *A View from the Carolingian Frontier Zone* cit., pp. 1-14.

⁶⁸ R. McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008, p. 149.

was an exclusive domestic regulation whose full implementation was controlled directly by the *missi dominici* (envoys of the ruler), it also demonstrates the value attached to the cultivation of lilies by the Carolingian administration. The text, therefore, is notable because it provides an insight on the perception towards lilies in the Frankish society during the Carolingian period, in which the flower was also associated with the religious symbolism.

Yet another document indicates the significance attached to the lilies during this period⁶⁹. The Plan of Saint Gall, which is a medieval architectural plan of a monastic compound dating from 820–830, depicts a complete Benedictine monastery complex including a church adjoined by a scriptorium, a sacristy, accommodation for guest monks and gate rooms, followed by the square cloister, the monks' area with dormitory, refectory, latrine facilities, washroom, kitchen, bakery and brewery⁷⁰. In the southeastern corner of the plan, there is a garden of plants (*hortus*) with a double row of multiple beds (fig. 4). The garden contains sixteen medical herbs including as rose, sage and cumin. The lily, on the other hand, was placed near the entrance of the garden, demonstrating its importance among the other plants, some of which included earlier in the *Capitulare de villis*.



Fig. 4 –The herb garden in the Plan of St. Gall featuring the lily, extracted and transliterated from Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen, Codex Sangallensis, Ms. 1092, c. 1, Reichenau, ca. 820–830⁷¹.

⁶⁹ On the dating of the document, see L. Price, *The Plan of St. Gall in Brief*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1982, p. ix.

⁷⁰ L.L. Coon, *Dark Age Bodies: Gender and Monastic Practice in the Early Medieval West*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2011, p. 170.

⁷¹ B. Beck, *Jardin monastique, jardin mystique. Ordonnance et signification des jardins monastiques médiévaux*, «Revue d'Histoire de la Pharmacie», 327 (2000), pp. 377-394, at p. 383.

The medicinal use and value of lilies was also mentioned in the Carolingian poetry. Written around 840, in his *Liber de cultura hortorum* (*Hortulus*), Walafrid Strabo describes plants and discusses aspects of horticulture⁷². Arranged in the same order as the *Capitulare de villis*, the text contains twenty-four medicinal plants and their potential applications in twenty-three stanzas, using verse form. In section 15, where the author gives instructions on the medical usage of the lily, he praises the qualities of this flower such as whiteness and fragrance⁷³. In a later passage where he compares the lily with the rose, he goes on to make religious references to the qualities of lilies:

Growing opposite, the glorious lilies offer up
 their blossoms, exhaling a fragrance which
 penetrates the air even further. And if someone
 crushes the buds of these snow-white lowers,
 he will soon be surprised to discover that
 the fragrance from the nectar quickly dissipates.
 In the same manner, Holy Chastity demonstrates
 her own virtue in that she blossoms forth and shines,
 as long as sinful coercion doesn't drive it away,
 and the passions of illicit love do not destroy it.
 But if she loses the adornment of purity,
 her sweet fragrance will turn into a vile odor⁷⁴.

Featuring Marian aspects in its tone, the lily in Strabo's allegory emphasizes the religious virtues of virginity and purity, represented by the whiteness and fragrance of the flower. Chastity, which has been regarded as one of the seven capital virtues in Christian tradition, is associated with the blossoming and brilliance of the lily. Moreover, destroying it identified with 'sinful coercion' and 'illicit love' –that is violation and adultery– referring to lust which has been considered as

⁷² J.G. Mayer, K.Goehl, *Kräuterbuch der Klostermedizin: Der 'Macer floridus'. Medizin des Mittelalters*, Reprint-Verlag, Leipzig, 2013, p. 29.

⁷³ W. Strabo, *On the Cultivation of Gardens: A Ninth Century Gardening Book*, edited by J. Mitchell, Ithuriel's Spear, San Francisco, 2009, pp. 56-7.

⁷⁴ «Huic famosa suos opponunt lilia flores, / Longius horum etiam spirans odor imbuit auras, / Sed si quis nivei candentia germina fructus / Triverit, aspersi mirabitur ilicet omnem / Nectaris ille fidem celeri periisse meatu / Hoc quia virginitas fama subnixa beata / Flore nitet, quam si nullus labor exagitarit / Sordis et illiciti non fregerit ardor amoris, / Flagrat odore suo / Porro si gloria pessum Integritatis eat, foetor mutabit odorem». Edited and translated by J. Mitchell, *On the Cultivation of Gardens* cit., pp. 82-3.

one of the seven deadly sins in Christianity⁷⁵. The following verses portray the connection between the lily and Mary in a more direct fashion, glorifying the spiritual characteristics of the flower:

Both these praiseworthy and famous lowers have
 been for centuries symbols of the highest honors.
 The Church gathers roses as a benefaction
 representing the blood of the martyrs, and
 bears lilies as a radiant sign of shining faith.
 O Holy Mary, Virgin and Mother, Mother
 with a fruitful womb, o Virgin of pure faith,
 a bride in the name of the bridegroom,
 o bride, dove, protectress, queen, faithful companion:
 pluck roses in time of strife, and lilies during
 glad times of peace. Thus a blossom springs
 from Mary out of the royal tree of Jesse:
 the one Savior from an ancient line, whose founder
 He also is. He sanctified the lilies by means
 of his teachings and glorious life, and gave
 the roses their color through his death.
 For his followers on earth he left behind peace,
 but also struggle. He unified the merits
 of both in his death, and promised triumphant
 victory as the everlasting reward⁷⁶.

The sequence depicts the lily as a sign of honor, mentioning its long-lasting symbolism as frequently seen in the decorations of the churches. While the rose, is identified with the blood of the martyrs, the lily is considered as the symbol of faith. In addition, the association of the lily with such spiritual values as peace, sanctity and life is notable in terms of demonstrating the Carolingian perception

⁷⁵ The origins of the concept of seven deadly sins in Christianity is linked with Evagrius Ponticus in the late 4th century. For more information, see C. Stewart, *Evagrius Ponticus and the 'Eight Generic Logismoi* in R. Newhauser (edited by) *In the Garden of Evil: The Vices and Culture in the Middle Ages*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, 2005, pp. 3-34.

⁷⁶ «Haec duo namque probabilius genera inclyta florum / Ecclesiae summas signant per saecula palmas, / Sanguine martyrii carpit quae dona rosarum, / Lili- aequae in fidei gestat candore nitentis. / O mater virgo, fecundo germine mater, / Virgo fide intacta, sponsi de nomine sponsa, / Sponsa, columba, domus, regina, fidelis amica, / Bello carpe rosas, laeta arripe lilia pace. / Flos tibi sceptrigero, venit generamine Iesse, / Unicus antiquae reparator stirpis et auctor, / Lilia qui verbis vitaeque dicavit amoena, / Morte rosas tinguens, pacemque et proelia membris / Liquit in orbe suis, virtutem amplexus utramque / Premiaque ambobus servans aeterna triumphis». Edited and translated by J. Mitchell, *On the Cultivation of Gardens* cit., pp. 82-3.

of the flower. With its interpretation relating to these values, in *Hortulus*, the symbolism of the lily was thus expanded beyond Marian explanation, which illustrates that the lily was regarded as a significant flower by the Carolingians not only because of its medicinal use but also due to its religious value. During this period, in fact, parallel references of the fleur-de-lis with the religious figures and values became quite common. The occurrence of lilies in Carolingian art, however, is characteristic of another form of art, namely illuminated manuscripts.

Implemented under Charlemagne as part of his new policies aiming to increase manuscript production, these illuminated manuscripts constitute the most numerous surviving works of the Carolingian Renaissance⁷⁷. The policies of Charlemagne pursued a number of goals such as recovering classical documents as well as creating and copying educational and liturgical texts, especially the Gospels⁷⁸. Produced in Frankish scriptoria such as Fleury, Soissons and Saint-Martin de Tours, these manuscripts were the luxurious artworks of the school of Charlemagne's court, elevating the reign of Carolingian rulers to an artistic golden age⁷⁹. Depending on the artists and influences of that specific time period, the manuscripts are presumed to have been largely produced by clerics⁸⁰. Modeled after the precedent of Insular and Classical art, these manuscripts were occasionally decorated with full-page miniatures containing the illustrations of Christian figures and picturing religious narrative images from the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.

The earliest known Carolingian illuminated manuscript, the so-called Godescalc Evangelistary, was commissioned by Charlemagne after his trip to Italy in 781⁸¹. Combining the styles of Insular, early Christian, and Byzantine art, the manuscript includes miniatures of the four Evangelists and Christ in Majesty in separate pages (fig. 5). The lily motifs, on the other hand, are featured at the upper part of the Christ on Majesty figure both as natural and ornamental decoration, showing parallels to the church mosaics in Ravenna,

⁷⁷ C. Denoël, P.R. Puyo, A.M. Brunet, N.P. Siloe, *Illuminating the Carolingian Era: New Discoveries as a Result of Scientific Analyses*, «Heritage Science», 6:1 (2018), pp. 1-19, at p. 1.

⁷⁸ M.P. Laffitte and C. Denoël, *Trésors carolingiens: livres manuscrits de Charlemagne à Charles le Chauve*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, 2007, pp. 43-47.

⁷⁹ C. Denoël et al., *Illuminating the Carolingian Era* cit., p. 1.

⁸⁰ C.R. Dodwell, *Pictorial Arts of the West, 800-1200*, Yale University Press, Yale, 1993, p. 52.

⁸¹ C. De Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, Phaidon Press Limited, Oxford, 1986, p. 45.

particularly of the Archbishop's Chapel and St. Vitale. In accordance with the classical tradition, therefore, the lily motifs were incorporated in the manuscripts for their religious significance, as with the case of sculpture.



Fig. 5 – The Christ in Majesty Miniature from the Godescalc Evangelistary. Produced in Aachen, Germany, between ca. 781-783. Bnf, Ms. Lat. 1203 c. 1

The representation of the lily motifs in conjunction with the Christian figures was retained in the subsequent manuscripts. The Ada Gospels, which date to between the late eighth and early ninth century, constitute a notable example of Carolingian illumination, cha-

racterized by their intricate and ornate decoration⁸². While the illuminations display both Insular and Byzantine-influenced fashion, the portraits of the Evangelists show a strong representation of the classical style of the Carolingian Renaissance. In the depiction of Matthew, for example, lilies are placed in the background, decorating the interior of the building in which he writes his Gospel⁸³. Similarly, on the Evangelist miniatures in the St. Riquier Gospels, which is another manuscript of the court school of Charlemagne from the first quarter of eighth century, the fleur-de-lis was included as a decorative element⁸⁴. Dating to the same period, the motif is also contained in the Lorsch Gospels, adorning the books of Mark and Matthew⁸⁵. Ivory reliefs on the back cover of the gospel, which is a significant example from the art of this period, depict the John the Baptist and Zachary on the sides as they accompany Mary and Child seated on a throne in the center⁸⁶. While the sections of John and Zachary are ornated with different floral motifs, that of Mary is decorated with the lily figures, attributing lilies a Marian interpretation, as in the case of the *hortulus* poem. These examples, therefore, are important because they show parallels with Byzantine and Lombard iconography in terms of the association of the lily motifs with divine figures such as Jesus, Mary and the Evangelists.

As a symbol of Christianity, the inclusion the fleur-de-lis continued in Carolingian manuscripts during the reign of Louis the Pious. In this period, however, the symbol acquired another aspect to its significance, adorning items that bear royal connotations as well. Correspondingly, in the Stuttgart Manuscript, which was created between 820 and 830, the fleur-de-lis appears both as a sign of Christianity and royalty. While the symbol maintained its religious characteristics, decorating various items accompanying Jesus such as the scepter, it acquired a new function as an ornamental element placed on the helmets and crowns⁸⁷. Especially in the case of royal portraits, the appearance of the fleur-de-lis on crowns suggests that the association of the lily symbol with the regalia started during the reign of Louis. This may also indicate that the adoption of the fleur-de-lis onto the crowns of Carolingian emperors dates from the same time.

⁸² M. Embach, *Das Ada-Evangeliar: (StB Trier, Hs 22): Die Karolingische Bilderhandschrift vol. 2*, Paulinus, Trier, 2010, p. 4.

⁸³ Stb, Ms. 22, c. 15v

⁸⁴ Bma, Ms. 4, cc. 17v, 53v, 66v, 101v

⁸⁵ Bdb, Ms. R II 1, c. 13v

⁸⁶ H. Schultz, *The Carolingians in Central Europe, their History, Arts, and Architecture: A Cultural History of Central Europe, 750-900*, Brill, Leiden, 2004, p. 283.

⁸⁷ For the fleur-de-lis scepter held by Jesus, see Wls, Ms. Bib. c. 42v

As with Charlemagne, however, the illustration of Louis in Carolingian iconography is scarce. Apart from a coin minted in Pavia between 814-818, in which he is portrayed wearing a crown decorated with a vague three-petal symbol, the most well-known depiction of Louis is an idealized portrait included in a *carmen figuratum* by Rabanus Maurus around 831. In this portrayal, Louis was shown as *miles Christi*, albeit without his regalia⁸⁸. On the other hand, Louis' imperial seal as reproduced in Jean Mabillon's *Librorum de re diplomatica supplementum* (1704), has Louis with a scepter and wearing a crown decorated with fleur-de-lis⁸⁹. Mabillon claimed that with this golden seal, which was found in the archive of Basilica of Saint Martin of Tours, Louis confirmed the Abbot Fridugisus' prayers and the privileges of the church⁹⁰. Taking the Stuttgart Psalter and finds of Mabillon into consideration, therefore, it is quite possible that the adoption of fleur-de-lis into the regalia initially took place during the reign of Louis the Pious, thus turning it into a symbol of both Christianity and Carolingian royalty.

This tradition was continued in the later manuscripts. Dating to 846, in the presentation miniature of the Vivian Bible, Charles the Bald was depicted with a fleur-de-lis decorated throne and crown during his kingship of West Francia⁹¹. Similarly, in the Gospels of Lothair from between 849 and 851, Emperor Lothair was depicted in the same fashion⁹². In parallel, Charles the Bald was also portrayed with a fleur-de-lis adorned throne, crown and scepter in his Psalter created between 842 and 869, that is during his reign as the Frankish Emperor (fig. 6)⁹³.

Based on these illustrations, it can be asserted that, during the reign of Louis, the fleur-de-lis gained a royal significance, beginning to appear on the regalia as featured in the Stuttgart Psalter. Although these regalia are typically worn or held by religious figures in the miniatures, it is probable that the association of the fleur-de-lis with royal symbolism originated prior to 841, irrespective of the portrayals of

⁸⁸ For the coin minted in Pavia, see A. Rovelli, *Il Denaro Di Pavia Nell'Alto Medioevo (VIII-XI Secolo)*, «Bollettino Della Società Pavese Di Storia Patria», 95 (1995), pp. 71-90, on pp. 73-5. For the depiction of Louis as soldier of Christ, see Bav, Codex Reg. Lat. 124, c. 4v

⁸⁹ R.C. Head, *Documents, Archives and Proof around 1700*, «The Historical Journal», 56 (2013), pp. 909-930, at p. 913.

⁹⁰ J. Mabillon, *Librorum de re diplomatica supplementum: in quo archetypa in his libris pro regulis proposita, ipsaeque regulae denuo confirmantur, novisque specimenibus & argumentis asseruntur & illustrantur* (Robustel, Lutetia, 1704, p. 58.

⁹¹ Bnf, Ms. Lat. 1 c. 423r

⁹² Bnf, Ms. Lat. 266, c. 1v

⁹³ Bnf, Ms. Lat. 1152, c. 3v

Louis in the psalter. After the reign of Louis, however, the fleur-de-lis as a symbol of royalty was directly associated with individuals, both the king of West Francia and the emperors. This also indicates that the symbol was very well integrated into the Carolingian regalia by year 850.



Fig. 6 – The Miniature of Emperor Charles the Bald featuring Fleur-de-lis Motifs from the *Psalterium Caroli Calvi*. Produced in Saint-Denis, France, between ca. 842 and 869. Bnf, Ms. Lat. 1152. c. 3v

The process of integration appears to be an evolutionary one. While Louis was represented with an ordinary scepter on his seal, as shown in Mabillon's illustration, the later depictions of his son,

Charles, added the scepter decorated with fleur-de-lis into the regalia, which was also illustrated by Mabillon on the imperial seal of Charles the Bald⁹⁴. In this case, the artists may have been influenced by an earlier miniature in the Stuttgart Psalter, in which Jesus is depicted with a spear adorned with a fleur-de-lis motif at the top. Alternatively, the depiction of Jesus with a large cross in classical artworks may also have been an inspiration, evolving into a three-petal lily figure on the scepter. Regarding the fleur-de-lis as a throne decoration, on the other hand, the classical iconography was potentially taken as a model where Jesus is represented on a throne adorned by lily motifs at the top, as with the case of the mosaic in St. Apollinare in Ravenna.

As for the crown, which was the most frequently illustrated royal symbol when compared with the scepter and throne, the fleur-de-lis was also included in a rare example of Carolingian sculpture. Probably made around 870 during the reign of Charles the Bald, an equestrian statuette in bronze depicts either him or Charlemagne with an open crown.⁹⁵ In parallel to those on manuscript illustrations of Charles the Bald, the crown here is adorned with multiple fleur-de-lis motifs. This demonstration is noteworthy for its exemplification of the manner in which inspiration derived from the Roman Imperial period was integrated with that of the late Carolingian era.

This addition of a political significance for the fleur-de-lis can also be observed in Carolingian literature. Indeed, the flower appear as a symbol of royalty during the reign of Lothair, in addition to earlier Marian interpretations and religious overtones of the lily in Christian symbolism. Dating from around 850, in *De rosae liliique certamine*, Sedulius Scottus features an imaginary debate between the lily and rose as twin sisters. Throughout the poem, the lily and rose enter in a verbal fight, each praising their own qualities. While the rose glorifies her purple color and values such as glory, charm and nobility; the lily responds by praising her own values such as whiteness, fertility and virginity, demonstrating parallels with its symbolism in the *Hortulus*. At one point, when however, the rose attacks the lily by calling out her old age with a potential reference to the lily's antiquity, the lily replies:

⁹⁴ J. Mabillon, *Librorum de re diplomatica supplementum* cit., p. 58.

⁹⁵ *Nordisk Familjebok*, vol. 13, edited by Th. Westrin, Stockholm, 1910, p. 1027.

The top of my head is adorned with beautiful gold
 nor am I cruelly encircled by a crown of thorns.
 The milk flows in sweet profusion from my snow-white breasts,
 and so they say that I am the blessed mistress among plants⁹⁶.

The fact that a crown of thorns encircle the rose's head while that of lily is surrounded with gold, symbolizes the golden crown worn by the rulers, referencing the lily motifs on the royal crowns. The royal connotations of the lily continue more clearly in the following verses, with Spring reconciling his twin daughters as a caring father:

'My beloved children, why are you fighting?' he said.
 'Recognise that you are twin sisters from the mother earth.
 Is it right for twins to quarrel with such overweening pride?
 Beautiful rose, be still. Your glory shines in the world,
 but let royal lilies hold sway with brilliant sceptres.
 And so your grace and beauty do you both credit forever:
 may the rose, emblem of modesty, bloom in our: gardens,
 and you, splendid lilies, grow with faces like the sun.
 Roses shall provide martyrs with their red sign of victory,
 lilies shall grace the long-robed throngs of maidens.'⁹⁷

In this passage, where the unique characteristics of both flowers are demonstrated, the lily is once again associated with virginity, glory and perhaps more notably, with royalty. While the lily here continues its religious imagery of virginity and fertility, the fact that it adorns 'brilliant scepters' is a direct reference to the fact that it has become a symbol of royalty at this point. The lily, associated solely with religious values earlier in *Hortulus*, therefore, emerges as a royal symbol in Carolingian literature around 850. The evolution of the fleur-de-lis from a religious into a religio-political symbol thus appears to be well-recognized, which also shows compatibility with its period of development in the visual arts.

⁹⁶ «Aureoli decoris mihi vertex comitur almus / Nec sum spinigera crudelis septa corona, / Profluit at niveis dulci lac ubere mammis: / Sic holerum dominam me dicunt esse beatam». Edited and translated by P. Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, Gerald Duckworth & Co., London, 1985, pp. 284-85.

⁹⁷ «Gnoscite vos geminas tellure parente sorores. / Num fas germanas lites agitare superbas? / O rosa pulchra, tace: tua gloria claret in orbe; / Regia sed nitidis dominantur lilia sceptris. / Hinc decus et species vestrum vos laudat in aevum: / Forma pudicitiae nostris rosa gliscat in hortis, / Splendida Phebeo vos, lilia, crescite vultu; / Tu, rosa, martyribus rutilam das stemmate palmam, / Lilia virgineas turbas decorate stolas». Edited and translated by P. Godman, *Poetry cit.*, pp. 284-85.

Conclusion

Three conclusions of a more general nature may be drawn from the material presented in this article. Firstly, as demonstrated in the earlier sections, as a significant motif in Christian iconography, the development of fleur-de-lis started during the late Roman period and its use in visual arts increasingly continued during the early Byzantine era. Secondly, the Lombards incorporated the fleur-de-lis into their artworks via the Byzantine religious compositions in Italy, especially after their conversion to Christianity. With the Liutprandean Renaissance in the eighth century, therefore, the fleur-de-lis appeared as one of the more common decorative elements in Lombard art, particularly in form of sculpture. Finally, during the early years of Charlemagne's reign, perhaps as late as his conquest of Northern Italy in 774, the Carolingians adopted a series of artistic elements into their building program, in which Byzantine architecture and Lombard sculpture were taken as models.

The fleur-de-lis, which was introduced into the Carolingian sculpture via Italy, emerged as an influential religious symbol in Carolingian society, appearing both in exegetical and poetic texts. In addition, the religious connotations of the fleur-de-lis were maintained in the illuminated manuscripts. During the reign of Louis the Pious, however, the symbol came to be associated with royalty, eventually appearing on Carolingian regalia, such as those of Lothair and Charles the Bald. The contemporary visual arts and literature followed similar imperatives, verifying the newly appointed religio-political significance of the fleur-de-lis around the mid-eighth century. During the reign of Charles, the symbol was fully developed into an essential element of the regalia, signifying both piety and royalty. The long journey of the fleur-de-lis into a dual, religio-political symbol from a purely religious one, was thus completed. From this period on, the lily, with its embedded political meaning, came to be widely used as a royal symbol in post-Carolingian France: to such an extent that, as an integral element of Capetian symbolism, the fleur-de-lis eventually became the most essential part of the royal coat of arms and the defining symbol of the French monarchy until the Revolution.

In light of the above, an attempt has been made to present at least some of the elements that can help to identify the royal origins of the fleur-de-lis, not only as a religious motif, but also as a political symbol which perhaps served the Carolingians during the process of identity-building and political consolidation. This study may be regarded as a preliminary contribution to the research on the evolution of the royal fleur-de-lis. As has been attempted, an examination of

the fleur-de-lis as a royal symbol necessitates an investigation of its representation in both religious and secular works. The term “royal lilies” encompasses a diverse array of objects and literature, including royal seals, coins, pieces of visual art, and historical texts. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the non-armorial lily, it is necessary to examine a multitude of sources beyond those pertaining to the heraldry. Consequently, future research could further examine the wider array of source material from the late antique Christian world in order to gain a deeper understanding of the evolution of the fleur-de-lis. In addition, further examination of the evidence may also facilitate a deeper understanding of the incorporation of the lily into the Carolingian regalia.