REVIEW

The Languages of Early Medieval Charters. Latin, Germanic Vernaculars, and the Written Word. By Robert Gallagher, Edward Roberts & Francesca Tinti (eds.). Brill, 2021. Pp. 548, xvi.

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The Languages of Early Medieval Charters. Latin, Germanic Vernaculars, and the Written Word edited by Robert Gallagher, Edward Roberts & Francesca Tinti, comprises 14 chapters (including an introduction by Tinti and a summary-epilogue by Janet L. Nelson) by various authors representing a whole spectrum of diverse research interests. The book explores a broad scope of issues regarding early medieval charters from Anglo-Saxon England and eastern Francia. It is a result of *The Languages of Early Medieval Charters* project, (https://www.ehu.eus/en/web/lemc), gathering contributions by academics who did research for the project itself, as well as others, invited to present their work at events accompanying it. As explained in the introduction, both the project and the book result from extensive research conducted into early medieval literacy and the role charters played in it, as well as a growing body of studies investigating historical multilingualism and medieval vernaculars which have emerged over the past three decades.

Chapter 2 ("Charters, languages and communication: Recent work on early medieval literacy") by Rosamond McKitterick offers a neat literature review of multifaceted studies into charters, which is an appropriate starting point for the volume. The chapter classifies those studies according to their focus and the role they play in the research area in question, from early paleographic analyses to texts offering promising avenues for future research, such as glossaries. This extensive outline gives an excellent idea of the many topics, issues, and research opportunities offered by the study of early medieval literacy. The extensive bibliography should be highlighted here too, as it is a good starting point for scholars interested in pursuing any topic from the area in question.

Chapter 3 ("The multilingualism of the early Middle Ages: Evidence from peripheral regions of the *Regnum orientalium Francorum*") by Wolfgang Haubrichs examines names and loanwords found in charters, inscriptions, and

other documentary sources in order to investigate how areas where Romance languages were spoken had evolved from Latin-speaking regions of the Roman Empire, exploring issues surrounding monolingualism, bilingualism, and multilingualism within that geographical area, offering an insightful study into acculturation.

Chapter 4 ("Germanic names, vernacular sounds, and Latin spellings in Early Anglo-Saxon and Alemanic charters") by Annina Seiler analyzes the orthography of vernacular elements (personal and place names) in the Anglo-Saxon charters and charter drafts from the Alemannic monastery of St Gall. The study explains and clearly demonstrates the important role that personal and place names played in various contexts. The analysis reveals a high orthographic and morphological variability in the investigated vernacular elements – including within single documents, which the author attributes to code-switching.

Chapter 5 ("Language, formulae, and Carolingian reforms: The case of the Alemmanic charters from St Gall") by Berhard Zeller, similarly to the previous one, investigates the unique charter material from St Gall, which comprises over 800 early medieval documents dating from before 1000. The study aims to trace various results of the Carolingian reform that can be observed from 780 onwards, revealing different geographical patterns of the use of Latin and vernaculars in legal documents. Zeller refers the results of his study to the broader question of the political dimension of language choice in the analyzed material.

Chapter 6 ("Signaling language choice in Anglo-Saxon and Frankish charters, c. 700–c. 900") by Edward Roberts & Francesca Tinti explores the emerging linguistic awareness in terms of the instrumental role of language in England and eastern Francia. Thanks to the geographical distribution of the analyzed charter material, and the insight into more everyday language which it provides compared to other medieval sources due to its performative character, the study shows how such documents allow to investigate the role vernaculars played in their communities, as well as how they interacted with Latin, revealing numerous examples of code-switching.

Chapter 7 ("The endorsement practices of early Medieval England") by Robert Gallagher & Kate Wiles catalogues and discusses the most characteristic endorsement practices found in the Anglo-Saxon single-sheet charters, revealing the numerous and various ways in which the vernacular was employed in those documents. By providing an outline of the changing functions of endorsements, the review situates charters in the wider context of the development of the Anglo-Saxon documentary culture and its dissemination.

Chapter 8 ("Traces of bilingualism in early Medieval Northern Italy: The evidence from eighth- and ninth-century private charters") by Marco Stoffella is geographically divergent from the rest of the volume, as it analyzes material from Italy. The chapter offers an extensive investigation of late Lombard and early

Carolingian private charters in terms of their contents, scribes, and subscribers. The study provides an insight into the complex linguistic situation of northern Italy on the example of the term *ferquidem*.

Chapter 9 ("Language of boundaries and boundaries of language") by Charles Insley studies insular vernaculars (Old English and Cornish) and the relationships between them and Latin on the example of vernacular toponyms found in Anglo-Saxon charters from Cornwall. The chapter explores the complex issue of language choice among the literate Cornish clergy, revealing evidence of bi- and trilingualism among them, and provides evidence for the existence of non-English documentary culture in Cornwall.

Chapter 10 ("Vernacular writing in early medieval manorial administration: Two tenth-century documents from Werden and Essen") by Stefan Esders is a comparative case study of two Frankish charters which use the vernacular rather than – as would be expected – Latin, due to the highly specific circumstances in which the documents were produced. Esders argues that the vernacular was employed in those documents to play a specific administrative and communicative function, highlighting the performative character of charters.

Chapter 11 ("Royal authority, regional integrity: The function and use of Anglo-Saxon writ formulae") by Albert Fenton analyzes pre-Conquest writs in English collected in the 1952 corpus edition by Florence Harmer, in terms of their physical appearance and form, performative character, diplomatic structure, and spatial formulae. The detailed summary outlines the most important features of this type of documents, ultimately situating them in the context of the Anglo-Saxon documentary culture as evidence of both legal and political activity.

Chapter 12 ("From memorandum to written record: Function and formality in Old English non-literary texts") by Kathryn A. Lowe discusses less known Anglo-Saxon documents from Bury St Edmunds, which provide examples of post-Conquest use of the vernacular for the purpose of formal documentation. The chapter makes a strong case for analyzing documentary records in the context of their archive collections, and argues for abandoning the category of "charters" in studies investigating such documents, as they are mostly associated with land grants; instead, Lowe proposes to use a more inclusive umbrella term "records" for a range of non-literary texts.

Chapter 13 ("Writing, communication, and currency: Dialogues between coinage and charters in Anglo-Saxon England") by Rory Naismith analyzes coins and their relationship with charters, treating both as elements of communication systems, pointing out three major differences between the two: (i) the people involved in their production, (ii) what was written in/on them, and (iii) their geographical distribution. In line with the whole volume, the chapter concludes with remarks regarding the broader context of literacy and communities of practice.

The book is an excellent survey of what can be studied in terms of charters and how such studies can be conducted, clearly demonstrating the versatility of this resource. The editors made sure to include a wide range of topics concerning different aspects of charters, the role they played in the communities that issued and relied on them, as well as different approaches to analyzing them, from detailed case studies to extensive literature reviews, to surveys presenting larger sets of data; hopefully the necessarily brief summary provided above gives a good idea of the many research opportunities charters have to offer.

Admittedly to some extent the studies presented here might feel slightly disparate. One reason is – paradoxically – precisely the above-mentioned versatility in terms of topics, approaches, and methodologies, further reinforced by the fact that the organization of the contents of the volume feels random, or at least there seems to be no clear idea behind it. Another reason is that the chapters focusing on the Anglo-Saxon material offer a more consistent insight than those analyzing examples representing other Germanic vernaculars, which is understandable given the unique role (Old) English had as a language of record compared to the rest of the contemporary world. Perhaps in order to address those issues, the editors made the choice to provide a coherent framework for the volume by referring the results and conclusions of each chapter to the social and cultural dimensions of Medieval Germanic documentary cultures, which ultimately does create a consistent leitmotif for the volume.

This leitmotif is an interesting and modern take on approaching Medieval literacy; by considering charters not just as written records, but also as highly performative documents which allow a rare insight into orality, the book focuses on communities of practice, social relationships, and instances of multilingualism resulting from practicing the Latin documentary culture by Germanic-speaking peoples. As such, the book is a valuable contribution to scholarship – linguistic, cultural, documentary, and historical – and is bound to inspire further research in those areas.