Abstract: Foreigners in the Early Middle Ages: notes on ch. 367 of the Edictum Rothari

The Longobardic legal term waregang has been studied since the 19th century from an anecdotic perspective only, and still waits to be analysed through an approach combining linguistic, juridical and historical analysis. This paper presents a brief systematic analysis of the historical features of the waregang’s legal person. The paper aims to find a common denominator among a sparse set of sources scattered over space and time, beginning with the chapter 367 of the Edictum Rothari, still the keystone of the argument. In the last section, the traditions mentioning the waregang are compared to those of the Anglo-Saxon wærgenga, of the Old Norse væring, of the Old Slavic varjag’ and of the medieval Greek várangia. The abnormal legal status of these foreigners in the Medieval juridical scene, and their spare presence in the Early and High Medieval sources, suggest that the Longobardic waregang – as attested in Italy – could be an offshoot of the Byzantine imperial guard (the várangoi).

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