

**Approaches to Community and Otherness in the Late  
Merovingian and Early Carolingian Periods**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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*This thesis is dedicated to Elle, for the adventure that has been the last ten years,  
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## Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine how contemporary authors approached and understood the communal identity of the inhabitants of the *regnum Francorum* from the seventh to the early ninth century. In order to do this, the study takes in a wide variety of narrative sources – historical and hagiographical – and addresses issues of both ‘community’ and ‘otherness’, and above all the relationship between the two. To this end, the study explores three related discourses that emerged and developed in this period. The first of these discourses concerned the Franks themselves, especially the way authors imagined a Frankish community composed of a single *gens* which overcame inherent divisions within the *regnum*. The second discourse involved the relationship between Franks and non-Franks, and how authors relied on concepts of rebellion and paganism rather than ethnic identity to encourage a sense of exclusion. Crucially, we shall see this was a discourse that only really emerged in the eighth century. The third discourse is represented by a case-study of a specific people – the Frisians that charts how they went from being peripheral pagans at the beginning of the eighth century to being seen as part of the community by the middle of the ninth. Above all, though, we seek to highlight the variety between the different authors who participated in these discourses, emphasising that, while there were over-arching ideas in each discourse, each author interpreted these ideas in an individual way. This provides us with a much more ambivalent picture of community and otherness from the period than we might expect.

## Abbreviations

### Primary Sources

<i>AMP</i>	<i>Annales Mettenses priores</i> , ed. B. de Simson, <i>MGH SRG</i> , 10 (Hanover, 1905).
<i>ARF</i>	<i>Annales Regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores</i> , ed. F. Kurze, <i>MGH SRG</i> , 6 (Hanover, 1895).
<i>CCCM</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Medievalis</i> (Turnhout, 1966-).
<i>Continuationes</i>	Fredegar, <i>Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii Scholastici libri IV. cum Continuationibus</i> , ed. B. Krusch, <i>MGH SRM</i> , 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 168-93.
<i>DLH</i>	Gregory of Tours, <i>Decem libri historiarum</i> , ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, <i>MGH SRM</i> 1, 1 (Hanover, 1937).
Fredegar	Fredegar, <i>Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii Scholastici libri IV.</i> , ed. B. Krusch, <i>MGH SRM</i> , 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 1-168.
<i>LHF</i>	<i>Liber Historiae Francorum</i> , ed. B. Krusch, <i>MGH SRM</i> , 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 215-328.
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
<i>SRG</i>	<i>Scriptores rerum germanicum in usum scholarum separatim editi</i> , 63 vols (Hannover, 1871-1987).
<i>SRM</i>	<i>Scriptores rerum merovingicarum</i> , ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, 7 vols (Hannover, 1885-1920).
<i>SS</i>	<i>Scriptores in folio</i> , 30 vols (Hannover, 1824-1924).
<i>Passio Leudegarii</i>	<i>Passio Leudegarii I</i> , ed. B. Krusch, <i>MGH SRM</i> , 5 (Hanover, 1910), pp. 282-322.
Revised <i>ARF</i>	<i>Annales Regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Einhardi</i> , ed. F. Kurze, <i>MGH SRG</i> , 6 (Hanover, 1895).
<i>Vita Balthildis</i>	<i>Vita Balthildis</i> , ed. B. Krusch, <i>MGH SRM</i> , 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 475-508.
<i>Vita Bonifatii</i>	Willibald, <i>Vita Bonifatii</i> , ed. W. Levison, <i>MGH SRG</i> , 57 (Hanover, 1905), pp. 1-58.
<i>Vita Gregorii</i>	Liudger, <i>Vita Gregorii abbatis Traiectensis</i> , ed. O. Holder-Egger, <i>MGH SS</i> , 15, 1 (Hanover, 1887), pp 63-79.

- Vita Karoli* Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH SRG*, 25 (Hanover, 1911).
- Vita Liudgeri* Altfred, *Vita sancti Liudgeri*, ed. W. Diekamp, *Die Vitae Sancti Liudgeri* (Munster, 1881), pp. 1-53.
- Vita Willibrordi* Alcuin, *Vita Willibrordi archiepiscopi Traiectensis*, ed. W. Levison, *MGH SRM*, 7 (Hanover, 1920), pp. 81-141.

### Secondary Sources

- Gerberding, *Rise* R.A. Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the Liber Historiae Francorum* (Oxford, 1987).
- Late Merovingian France* P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography 640-720* (Manchester and New York, 1996).
- Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms* I.N. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms* (London, 1994).
- Wood, *Missionary Life* I.N. Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe, 400-1050* (London, 2001).

## Note on Names, Titles and Translations

When studying the early medieval period, one is confronted with a series of unfamiliar and often unusual names. Especially in the case of the Merovingian period, standardised English versions of personal names do not necessarily exist. In order to provide internal consistency for this study, I have followed the spellings in Wood's *Merovingian Kingdoms*, with the exception of Leudegar of Autun, where I have followed Fouracre and Gerberding's *Late Merovingian France*. Names of the Carolingian period are – generally – more standardised, with one notable exception, where I have used Pippin (rather than, for example, Pepin). I have also referred to the first three Pippins by their ordinal numbers rather than their epithets.

As a rule, I have retained Latin titles such as *dux* or *princeps* because modern equivalents of these ('duke', 'prince') seem somewhat anachronistic. The exceptions to this are titles which seem more straightforward; for example *rex* is translated 'king' and *episcopus* 'bishop'.

All translations in this study are my own. English translations of many of the sources exist, however, and I have had cause to consult them in the course of my research. As acknowledgement of this, and in order to guide the reader towards further useful resources, I have included translated versions of primary sources in the Bibliography.



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## Introduction

### The Franks between the Roman and Carolingian Empires

The Franks were arguably the most successful of the various ‘barbarian’ peoples who created kingdoms during the contraction and in the aftermath of Roman political power in Western Europe.<sup>1</sup> They created a kingdom that, at its height, stretched from the Pyrenees in the South to the River Elbe in the North-East and from Brittany in the West to Bavaria in the East. Unlike many of the other barbarian peoples, Frankish royal power was based on rule over many other peoples and ethnic groups, although the Franks always remained at the heart of the conception of the *regnum Francorum*.<sup>2</sup> As we shall see in the coming pages, though, the presence of non-Franks within the *regnum* created a tension that was often addressed but never solved.

The chronological scope of this study is the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, roughly speaking the period c.660 to 840. Already by the start of this period, the *regnum Francorum* was well-established, to the point its existence was never in question, even if it was never quite defined either. Likewise, the existence of a group of people called ‘Franks’ (*Franci*) was never questioned; in the first chapter we shall see how various authors discussed and referred to this group. In the second half of our period, the *regnum* transformed into an *imperium* as the Franks expanded and consolidated their ruler over peripheral peoples that had long been their subjects, even if only nominally; in the second chapter we shall see what place these peoples had in contemporary Frankish discourse. These peoples did not long

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<sup>1</sup> The historiography of the Franks is vast. For general overviews which are particularly relevant to the present study, see J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings and Other Studies in Frankish History* (London, 1962); E. Zöllner, *Geschichte der Franken bis zur Mitte des sechsten Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1970); E. Ewig, (ed.), *Spätantikes und Fränkisches Gallien: Gesammelte Schriften* 3 vols (Munich, 1976-9); R. McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms Under the Carolingians, 751-987* (London and New York, 1983); E. James, *The Franks* (Oxford, 1988); Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*; J.L. Nelson, (ed.), *The Frankish World, 750-900* (London, 1996); contributions to I.N. Wood, (ed.), *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 1998); contributions to P. Fouracre and D. Ganz (eds), *Frankland: The Franks and the World of the Early Middle Ages* (Manchester, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> H.-W. Goetz, ‘Gens, Kings and Kingdoms: The Franks’, in H.-W. Goetz, J. Jarnut and W. Pohl (eds), *Regna et Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 307-344; H. Wolfram, ‘How Many Peoples are (in) a People?’, in W. Pohl, C. Gantner and R. Payne (eds), *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World: The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300-1100* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 101-8.

remain passive participants in the Carolingian empire, though, as various groups sought to define their history and their place in the Frankish realm; in the third chapter we shall consider the sources written about and by one of these groups: the Frisians. Before explaining more about the purpose of this study, though, it is worth providing some context by briefly outlining the history of the Franks from the establishment of their kingdom under the Merovingian dynasty to the consolidation of their empire under the Carolingians.

In addition to the more expansive nature of their power, the Franks differed from most of the other barbarian peoples in their lack of movement during Late Antiquity – what for the barbarians is often referred to as the ‘Migration Period’ or *Völkerwanderung*. The Franks expanded from the area around the Lower and Middle Rhine into central and southern Gaul, but they did not come to the Rhine from further afield, contrary to what Merovingian authors would claim about the Trojan origins of the Franks. Unlike the Goths, Vandals or Lombards, for example, who travelled significant distances over the course of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, there is no evidence the Franks had ever lived anywhere other than around the Rhine.<sup>3</sup> The ‘Franks’ of this period appear to have been a confederation composed of various sub-groups,<sup>4</sup> of which some, such as the Salians, Ripuarians and possibly Sicambri, seem to have held an important place in Frankish identity into the Merovingian period.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, though, it is not always easy to distinguish in these sources whether a mentioned group was ‘Frankish’ or not; the lines between Franks and Saxons are particularly indistinct in the late Roman sources, with both groups occupying lands between the Rhine and the Elbe and engaging in raids and piracy across the English Channel and in northern Gaul.<sup>6</sup> Like

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<sup>3</sup> For the early history of the Franks, down to the reign of Clovis I, see Wallace-Hadrill, *Long-Haired Kings*, pp. 148-62; Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 35-41. For example of early references to the Franks, see *Historia Augusta*, ed. S.H. Ballou, H. Peter and D. Magie, 3 vols (London, 1921-32), ‘Diuus Aurelianus’, 6; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. and trans. J.C. Rolfe, 3 volumes (London, 1950-2), vol. 3, xv.5.11. See also references to the lost works of Sulpicius Alexander and Rhenatus Profuturus Frigidarius in *DLH*, ii.9.

<sup>4</sup> E. Zöllner, *Geschichte der Franken*; R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes* (Köln, 1961), pp. 512-41. See also James, *Franks*, pp. 35-8.

<sup>5</sup> The first two groups are evinced by the existence of the Salian and Ripuarian law codes: *Pactus legis Salicae*, ed. E.A. Eckhart, *MGH Leges*, 4, 1 (Hanover, 1962), pp. 1-236; *Lex Ribvaria*, ed. F. Beyerle and R. Buchner, *MGH Leges*, 3, 2. For discussion, see Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 102-19. Ripuarians are mentioned in *LHF*, 38. Sicambrians are alluded to in *DLH*, ii.31 and *LHF*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> I.N. Wood, ‘The Channel from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD’, in S. McGrail (ed.), *Maritime Celts, Frisians and Saxons* (London, 1990), pp. 93-7.

most peoples of this period, though, the Franks were in close contact with Roman authority as allies and auxiliaries, with some individual Franks able to rise rather high in Roman service.<sup>7</sup>

At some point during the fifth century, one family rose to prominence among the Franks, although initially possibly only among the Salians. This family is known to history as the Merovingian dynasty, the first and longest ruling royal dynasty of the Franks. Unfortunately, the mid-fifth century represents something of a low-point as far as references to the Franks go, and so the early members of the Merovingian dynasty remain shadowy figures known from later legends rather than contemporary sources. Of the early Merovingians, the first for whom we have significant evidence is Childeric I, although accounts of him are somewhat problematic.<sup>8</sup>

It is with Childeric's son Clovis I we leave the realm of legend and enter the realm of history, although even memories of Clovis were not free from legendary embellishment. Clovis extended Frankish authority across most of Gaul, and gained significant influence over those areas he did not come directly to rule; indeed, he was probably responsible for consolidating Frankish royal power in one family and one person.<sup>9</sup> Just as important as his military and political accomplishments, though, was his decision c.507/8 to convert to Catholicism.<sup>10</sup> Clovis's personal conversion precipitated the wider conversion to Catholicism of his people, although we should bear in mind it probably also reflected conversions which were already taking place among the Franks. The rest of Merovingian – indeed, Frankish – history is therefore Christian. This is important both for the way contemporary authors wrote about their world and the way we interpret their world and what they said about it.

Much has been made by modern scholars of supposed 'pagan' survivals in the Merovingian world, especially with regard to the kings themselves and the symbols of their power.<sup>11</sup> From the other side, some texts have been interpreted as primarily 'secular' in conception and execution. In truth, such interpretations – whether they emphasise paganism or secularity – doubtless overstate their cases and

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<sup>7</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 36.

<sup>8</sup> *DLH*, ii.18-19. For discussion of Childeric, his spectacular grave discovered in 1653, and subsequent historiography, see S Lebecq, 'The Two Faces of King Childeric : History, Archaeology, Historiography', in W. Pohl and M. Diesenberger (eds), *Integration und Herrschaft : Ethnische Identitäten und soziale Organisation in Frühmittelalter* (Vienna, 2002), pp. 119-32.

<sup>9</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 41-9.

<sup>10</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 43-6.

<sup>11</sup> Crucial for revising older attitudes was Y. Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul A.D. 481-751* (Leiden, 1995), pp. 154-206.

certainly ignore the level to which Christianity permeated the early medieval world. This is not to say there had not originally been a symbolic pagan element to Merovingian kingship, but we should not necessarily look for traces of it in sources written centuries after Clovis's conversion.<sup>12</sup> Nor should a text such as *Liber Historiae Francorum*, which contains references to saints, God and the Devil throughout – not to mention Biblical allusions – be seen as a 'secular' history because it contains elements of 'heroic' literature. We shall return to these ideas shortly, but for now it will suffice to acknowledge the complexity of texts and authors who wrestled with a variety of cultural influences.

Clovis's reign saw the beginning of the apogee of the Merovingian period, both in terms of the extent of royal power and of what we know about the Franks before the Carolingian period. Gregory of Tours provides a great deal of information about the deeds of Clovis, his sons and grandsons, particularly in terms of their wars against peripheral peoples and against each other, although narrating the history of the Franks was not Gregory's sole or even primary purpose, as we shall see. Nevertheless, while he provides us with an important window on the world of sixth-century Gaul, we must be careful not to take his word at face value.<sup>13</sup> What he shows us, though, is the extension of Frankish power under Clovis, his sons and grandsons. Not least of these extensions were the conquest of Aquitaine – formerly held by the Visigoths – in 507,<sup>14</sup> which remained an annex of the *regnum Francorum* into the eighth century, and the conquest of Burgundy c.534, which had become a stable sub-division of the kingdom by the end of the sixth century.<sup>15</sup>

Gregory also shows us the consolidation of a tri-partite division of the *regnum* which essentially became the model for the sub-divisions of the kingdom for the remainder of the Merovingian period. But he also narrates the rivalries between Clovis's grandsons and perhaps even more so between Brunhild and Fredegund, the

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<sup>12</sup> I.N. Wood, 'Deconstructing the Merovingian Family', in R. Corradini, M. Diesenberger and H. Reimitz (eds), *The Construction of Communities: Texts, Resources and Artefacts* (Brill, 2003), pp. 149-71, at pp. 149-55. For a refutation of the supposed pagan and sacral elements of Merovingian kingship, see M. Diesenberger, 'Hair, Sacrality and Symbolic Capital in the Frankish Kingdoms', in R. Corradini, M. Diesenberger and H. Reimitz (eds), *The Construction of Communities: Texts, Resources and Artefacts* (Brill, 2003), pp. 173-212.

<sup>13</sup> For a recent overview of the state of scholarship on Gregory, see E.T. Dailey, *Gregory of Tours and the Women in His Works: Studies in Sixth-Century Gaul*, (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2011), pp. 1-3.

<sup>14</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 47-8.

<sup>15</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 51-4.

wives of Sigibert I and Chilperic I respectively.<sup>16</sup> These rivalries dominated the second half of the sixth century, although external interests were not neglected, with wars undertaken against the Visigoths and Lombards,<sup>17</sup> and Frankish authority maintained east of the Rhine.

By the turn of the seventh century, though, we can detect a change in the nature of the *regnum Francorum*. The tripartite division of the *regnum* crystallised into three sub-kingdoms: Burgundy, Austrasia, and Neustria. These sub-kingdoms are known to modern scholarship as the *Teilreiche*,<sup>18</sup> and they shall be one of our main focusses in the first chapter. In the 590s both Austrasia and Burgundy came into the hands of Sigibert's son Childebert II, who in turn passed them onto his sons; the eldest, Theudebert II, got Austrasia, while Theuderic II got Burgundy.<sup>19</sup> This consolidation left Chilperic's son, Chlothar II, with only a tiny strip of land along the Channel coast to call his kingdom. Yet despite all the odds, it was Chlothar who emerged triumphant from these civil wars, and with his victory and re-unification of the *regnum* in 613 we enter the period which shall be the focus of our present study. We shall examine the circumstances that led to Chlothar's triumph in the first chapter, but for now it will suffice to say Theudebert and Theuderic turned on each other, with the latter killing his brother and taking his kingdom. But the following year he died of dysentery and when his grandmother Brunhild attempted to set up his son Sigibert II as his successor, a sizeable section of the nobilities of Austrasia and Burgundy abandoned her and sided with Chlothar, who subsequently conquered the kingdoms and sentenced Brunhild and three of Theuderic's four surviving sons to death.<sup>20</sup>

Chlothar's triumph led to an important re-alignment of the political structure of the *regnum Francorum*. In 623 he appointed his son Dagobert I as sub-king of Austrasia, keeping Neustria and Burgundy for himself. This division remained the standard for the next sixty years: Neustria and Burgundy continued to exist as separate entities, but they shared kings and political processes, while Austrasia had its own kings and nobility for most of the century, until the death of the last

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<sup>16</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 88-101. On Brunhild and Fredegund, see Dailey, *Gregory of Tours*, pp. 100-74.

<sup>17</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 164-74.

<sup>18</sup> The most important study of the sub-kingdoms remains E. Ewig, 'Die Fränkischen Teilreiche im 7. Jahrhundert (613-714)', in E. Ewig (ed.), *Spätantikes und Fränkisches Gallien*, vol. 1 (München, 1976), pp. 172-230, although some aspects of his argument are now outdated.

<sup>19</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 91.

<sup>20</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 91, 140-4.

independent Austrasian king, Dagobert II, in 679 (although there was a brief resumption of independent Austrasian royal power in 717-18). For the seventh and early eighth centuries we are dependent on two historical narrative sources: the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, which continues Gregory's narrative down to the beginning of the 640s; and *Liber Historiae Francorum*, which also continues Gregory's narrative, but down to the beginning of the 720s; these sources are also supplemented by the information that can be gleaned from the various saints' *Lives* written during the seventh century. We shall have more to say about these sources shortly.

The joint reign of Chlothar II and Dagobert I has traditionally been seen as something of an Indian Summer for the Merovingians before the long, slow decline and decadence of the so-called *rois fainéants* who succeeded them. Between them, Chlothar and Dagobert consolidated the achievements of the sixth century, imposing new order on the *Teilreiche* and cultivating a court culture of learning and education.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, they appear to have maintained Frankish authority over the peripheral peoples, at least initially. Certainly, they still engaged in wars across the Rhine.<sup>22</sup> As we shall see in chapter two, non-Franks were increasingly released from Frankish rule or fought for their independence in the seventh century;<sup>23</sup> why this happened is not always clear, but by the end of the century Frankish rule over non-Franks was not what it had been in the sixth century.

Dagobert's sons, Sigibert III and his half-brother Clovis II, have been seen as the first of the so-called *rois fainéants*, the 'do-nothing' kings who cast a shadow over the end of the Merovingian period. According to traditional scholarship, Dagobert's descendants were kings in name only, actually being puppets of the over-mighty noble factions and nothing more than tools in the factional in-fighting that supposedly dominated the late seventh and early eighth century; above all other nobles – and the 'real' rulers in this period – were the mayors of the palace.<sup>24</sup> Most prominent and important of these were the Pippinids, who had come to monopolise mayoral authority in Austrasia by the end of the seventh century, and had added

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<sup>21</sup> Y. Hen, *Roman Barbarians: The Royal Court and Culture in the Early Medieval West* (Basingstoke and New York, 2007), pp. 94-123.

<sup>22</sup> For example, *LHF*, 41.

<sup>23</sup> Fredegar, iv.68, 74-5, 87.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Wallace-Hadrill, *Long-Haired Kings*, pp. 231-48, although he does have some reservations. For a recent re-statement of this view see T. Kölzer, 'Die Letzten Merowingerkönige: rois fainéants?', in M. Becher and J. Jarnut (eds), *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751: Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung* (Münster, 2004), pp. 33-60.



Neustria-Burgundy to this in the first decades of the eighth century;<sup>25</sup> their ascent would eventually see them seize royal power in the person of Pippin III, who ushered in the Carolingian dynasty by overthrowing the last Merovingian in 751, and whose son Charlemagne would go on to be crowned emperor in 800.

In fact, as important recent scholarship has shown, the shadow over the end of Merovingian rule was actually cast by later Carolingian historians who rewrote the late Merovingian kings in order to justify Pippin's usurpation.<sup>26</sup> Rather than being dominated by factional squabbles that often erupted into civil wars, the *regnum Francorum* of the late Merovingian period was incredibly stable, while the Merovingians themselves continued to occupy a central place in the political and cultural life of the kingdom, and the dynasty continued to produce effective and impressive rulers, some of whom we shall meet in chapter one.<sup>27</sup> The late Merovingians probably wielded less influence outside the Frankish heartlands than their predecessors had done and leading armies seems to have been a less important part of their role within society, but we should not over-emphasise either of these points. Both Fredegar and the *LHF*-author show us a world which still revolved around the Merovingians, and the political processes of the *regnum* could not take place without them. It is important to read these and contemporary sources for what they tell us about the nature of Merovingian kingship in the period, not simply to see them as confirming later Carolingian misconceptions of Merovingian kingship.

Little is known about the reigns of Dagobert's sons because Fredegar's account ends in 642 and the *LHF*-author did not have much to say about them. They seem to have maintained the internal peace of the *regnum*, at least, even if Sigibert witnessed the decline of Merovingian power across the Rhine.<sup>28</sup> In events which have perhaps received more attention than they deserve,<sup>29</sup> Sigibert was succeeded by a king known as Childebert 'the Adopted', who may or may not have been his son, under the influence of the mayor of palace Grimoald I, while his definite son, Dagobert II, was sent to exile in Ireland. The Neustrians invaded Austrasia to remove Grimoald from power, taking him back to Neustria and executing him:

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<sup>25</sup> Gerberding, *Rise*, 92-145; P. Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel* (Harlow, 2000).

<sup>26</sup> P. Fouracre, 'The Long Shadow of the Merovingians' in J. Story (ed.), *Charlemagne: Empire and Society* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 5-21.

<sup>27</sup> For a summary of such re-assessments, see Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 234-8.

<sup>28</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 155-8.

<sup>29</sup> The most recent assessment may be found in I.N. Wood, "'There is a World Elsewhere': The World of Late Antiquity", (Forthcoming).

Childebert's fate is unknown.<sup>30</sup> We shall explore these events further in the first chapter.

The Neustria, meanwhile Clovis II was succeeded in 657 by his eldest son, Chlothar III. Five years later, Chlothar's brother Childeric II was made king of Austrasia.<sup>31</sup> Again, though, this period of joint rule by two brothers seems to have been peaceful.<sup>32</sup> In 673 Chlothar died.<sup>33</sup> Initially, he was succeeded by a third brother, Theuderic III, but for reasons we shall return to, the Neustrians overthrew Theuderic and his mayor, Ebroin, and brought in Childeric from Austrasia, who enjoyed a brief rule over a re-united *regnum* before he was murdered. Theuderic was then made king of Neustria again,<sup>34</sup> although this did not end the struggles which led the Austrasians to bring Sigibert III's son Dagobert II back from exile as their king before murdering him in 679.<sup>35</sup>

No heir was found for Dagobert II by the Austrasians, though, and this led to another re-alignment of the political structures of the *regnum*. The Austrasians, under the leadership of their mayor, Pippin II, now attempted to integrate themselves into the political sphere based on Neustria.<sup>36</sup> Pippin's mayoralty was traditionally seen as the point at which the ascent of the Pippinid-Carolingians became inevitable and irreversible, his victory over the Neustrians at the Battle of Tertry in 687 traditionally signalling the beginning of his dominance over the entire *regnum*. In fact, Tertry was not so significant as Carolingian historians would make it out to be, and the integration of Pippin and the Austrasians into Neustro-Burgundian politics remained a drawn-out process.<sup>37</sup> But this process of integration changed things.<sup>38</sup>

In 695 Pippin appointed his son, Grimoald II, as mayor of Neustria-Burgundy, and after the latter's death in 714 Grimoald's son, Theudoald, was briefly mayor even though he was probably still a minor. After Pippin's own death later in

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<sup>30</sup> Most, but not all of these details can be gleaned from *LHF*, 43.

<sup>31</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 224-9.

<sup>32</sup> *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 112-14.

<sup>33</sup> The subsequent events can be learned by combining the information from *Passio Leudegarii* and *LHF*, 45.

<sup>34</sup> *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 210-14.

<sup>35</sup> P. Fouracre, 'Forgetting and Remembering Dagobert II: The English Connection', in P. Fouracre and D. Ganz (eds), *Frankland: The Franks and the World of the Early Middle Ages* (Manchester, 2008), pp. 70-89.

<sup>36</sup> H. Stegeman, *The Growth of an Austrasian Identity: Processes of Identification and Legend Construction in the Northeast of the Regnum Francorum, 600-800* (Meppel, 2014), 80-2.

<sup>37</sup> Gerberding, *Rise*, pp. 92-115; Fouracre, *Charles Martel*.

<sup>38</sup> *LHF*, 48-53.

714, though, the Neustrians turned to one of their own, Ragamfred, as mayor, and – after the death Dagobert III in 715 – found an adult Merovingian, Chilperic II, to lead them in their war against the Austrasians.<sup>39</sup> Pippin’s last remaining adult heir, Charles Martel, now took up the reigns of leadership in Austrasia, and the rest of Merovingian history essentially belongs to him and his sons Pippin III and Carloman. Charles defeated the Neustrians and made himself mayor of the entire *regnum*. After Chilperic II’s death in 721, Dagobert III’s son Theuderic IV was made king, but he seems to have been a *roi fainéant* in truth. After Theuderic’s death in 737 Charles even took the momentous step of not allowing the succession of a new king, and effectively took the royal power – but not the title – himself.<sup>40</sup>

While Merovingian rule lasted till 751, with Charles Martel and his sons we have effectively entered a new phase of history: the last two Merovingian kings, Theuderic IV and Childeric III are all but absent from the historical record, except where Carolingian historians thought it worth mentioning the latter’s deposition.<sup>41</sup> Not only did Charles rule as king in all but name, his policies and those of his sons were much more outward-looking than those of the late seventh-century Merovingians and mayors. The early Carolingian sources take up the narrative of Frankish history where the *LHF*-author had left off in the 720s, but they focus above all on the wars of Charles Martel and his sons against the peripheral peoples. There was likely a combination of factors involved in such policies, of which the two most important would have been the legacy the Carolingians inherited from Austrasian politics, which had always been more concerned with the relationship with the peripheral peoples than had the politics of Neustria and Burgundy, and the need to provide the Franks with common enemies against whom they could unite.<sup>42</sup> This shift in policy ultimately culminated in Charlemagne’s Saxon Wars and the creation of a Frankish-Carolingian empire.

When Charles Martel died in 741,<sup>43</sup> he divided the *regnum* between his sons.<sup>44</sup> The eldest, Carloman, took Austrasia and the regions east of the Rhine, while the younger, Pippin III, took Neustria. But there was resistance to this Carolingian

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<sup>39</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 267-72.

<sup>40</sup> Fouracre, *Charles Martel*, pp. 155-66.

<sup>41</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 751; *Vita Karoli*, 1.

<sup>42</sup> Stegeman, *Austrasian Identity*, pp. 71, 199-204.

<sup>43</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 741.

<sup>44</sup> On the succession and its presentation in early Carolingian sources, see E. Goosmann, *Memorable Crises: Carolingian Historiography and the Making of Pippin’s Reign, 750-900* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2013), pp. 91-123.

succession, both from Carloman and Pippin's half-brother Grifo, and on the peripheries, where Grifo looked for support; in an attempt to counter this, Carloman and Pippin made the decision to raise a new Merovingian king, Childeric III, to the throne in 743.<sup>45</sup> In 747, though, Carloman decided to become a monk and leave the secular sphere,<sup>46</sup> effectively leaving Pippin as the sole ruler of the *regnum*, and in 751 Pippin took the unprecedented step of removing Childeric and making himself king.<sup>47</sup> This decision left an indelible mark on Frankish history, and subsequent authors wrestled with how to portray this decision, and even with exactly what had occurred in the years surrounding Pippin's fateful decision.

The increasing focus on the peripheries of the *regnum* went hand-in-hand with an increasing sense of Frankish society as much more explicitly Christian. The late eighth century saw the Carolingians constantly depicted as doing God's work and as undertaking wars and emerging victorious with his aid: such language had rarely, if ever been used in the Merovingian period. At the same time, the Carolingians made themselves defenders of the Papacy in Italy and the Franks came to be seen in some circles as a New Israel, in other words God's chosen people. We must be careful not to push these points too far and understate Merovingian Christianity or imagine the perception of the Franks as a New Israel was universal in the Carolingian world,<sup>48</sup> but such language as was being used shows the extent to which Christianity explicitly was a part of the way the Carolingians presented themselves. All of this was part of a wider intellectual movement known to modern scholarship as the 'Carolingian Renaissance'. Pippin's son Charlemagne, who came to the throne on the death of his father in 768, was the architect of this renaissance.<sup>49</sup> In addition to pursuing ever more determined wars against the peripheral peoples, and especially the Saxons, he attracted an extensive group of scholars from across Western Europe to his court. While these scholars engaged in multi-faceted

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<sup>45</sup> Childeric was probably the son of Theuderic IV, but may just have easily been the son of Chilperic II; see Wood, 'Deconstructing', p. 161.

<sup>46</sup> See E. Goosmann, 'Politics and Penance: Transformations in the Carolingian Perception of the Conversion of Carloman (747)', in C. Gantner, R. McKitterick and S. Meeder (eds), *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Forthcoming).

<sup>47</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 290-2.

<sup>48</sup> M. Garrison, 'The Franks as the New Israel? Education for an Identity from Pippin to Charlemagne', in Y. Hen and M. Innes (eds), *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 114-61.

<sup>49</sup> There have, inevitably, been many studies of Charlemagne and his reign. Most recently, see R. Collins, *Charlemagne* (Basingstoke, 1998); contributions to J. Story (ed.), *Charlemagne: Empire and Society* (Manchester, 2005); R. McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge, 2008).

intellectual pursuits, perhaps the most important for our purpose was the renewed interest in history-writing that made the early Carolingian period one of the best documented in early medieval history. We shall return to the kinds of sources that were written in this period shortly.

Charlemagne was to the Carolingians as Clovis I had been to the Merovingians. He consolidated and extended accomplishments of the past fifty years, bringing all of Gaul and even parts of northern Spain under his authority, annexing the Lombard kingdom in 774 and Bavaria in 788, and undertaking the long and gruelling Saxon Wars which ultimately saw the conquest of Saxony by 804. His crowning achievement, literally, was the imperial coronation that took place in Rome in 800.<sup>50</sup> This was certainly not the spontaneous and surprising event it is often depicted as,<sup>51</sup> but the culmination of a series of Franco-papal negotiations going back to those between Pippin III and Pope Stephen II. Charlemagne died in 814, but despite having four sons who survived to adulthood, only one – Louis the Pious – outlived him to inherit the whole of the vast realm that had been created in the second half of the eighth century. Louis's reign and abilities as a ruler have been compared to Charlemagne's, and the son has – perhaps inevitably – been found wanting. His reign got off to a rocky start when he deposed his nephew, Bernard of Italy, and was implicated in his murder; he never truly recovered from this. The Carolingian expansion was finally grinding to a halt and the internal situation of the empire was not particularly secure. Louis had a troubled relationship with his sons, and was deposed by them in 833 before returning to power the following year: two of his sons were still in rebellion against him when he died in 840. Nevertheless, the intellectual achievements of the 'Carolingian Renaissance' continued throughout Louis's reign, and it would be wrong to give an entirely negative assessment of this period.<sup>52</sup>

With Louis's death and the division of the empire between his sons, Carolingian history entered a new phase which lies beyond the scope of this study,

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<sup>50</sup> On which, see, for example, R. Collins, 'Charlemagne's Imperial Coronation and the Annals of Lorsch,' in J. Story (ed.), *Charlemagne: Empire and Society* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 54-64; H. Mayr-Harting, 'Charlemagne, the Saxons, and the Imperial Coronation of 800', *English Historical Review*, 111 (1996), 1113-1133.

<sup>51</sup> For example, *Vita Karoli*, 28.

<sup>52</sup> The most comprehensive recent study of Louis's reign is M. de Jong, *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-840* (Cambridge, 2009). See also the contributions to P. Godman and R. Collins (eds), *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious* (Oxford, 1990).

but there is one further element of early Carolingian history to outline before moving on. During the eighth century, Anglo-Saxons came to the Continent in increasing numbers, initially to work as missionaries, but increasingly to take up ecclesiastical positions in the Carolingian realm.<sup>53</sup> Although this was not the first movement of insular churchmen to the Continent it was arguably the largest and most influential. The contribution of the Anglo-Saxons to both Carolingian external policy and to the ‘Renaissance’ cannot be underestimated. As far as we know, the first of the Anglo-Saxons to work as a missionary on the Continent was Wilfrid, the controversial and well-travelled archbishop of York,<sup>54</sup> although his efforts amounted to a brief and probably opportunistic stay in Frisia.<sup>55</sup> He was followed by his disciple Willibrord, who arrived in Frisia in the 690s and travelled to Rome to be appointed missionary bishop of Utrecht in 695. Willibrord worked for the rest of his life in Frisia and Austrasia, and was a close ally of Pippin II and Charles Martel.<sup>56</sup> Willibrord’s work was largely overshadowed by another missionary who arrived on the Continent in 716: Boniface.<sup>57</sup>

Boniface’s life and legacy will be examined further in chapter two, but for now we can say he had a long and multi-faceted continental career. Certainly, he arrived with the intention of acting as a missionary, and worked alongside Willibrord for a time, before moving east to Hesse and Thuringia. Here and in Bavaria, he worked as a ‘corrector’ rather than a ‘convertor’, organising Church hierarchy, founding monasteries and educating those who claimed already to be Christians but did not necessarily live up to his rigorous standards. Likewise, in the 740s he turned his attention to the Franks, organising two church councils with Carloman and inspiring Pippin to hold one of his own. Yet Boniface lived in something of a transitional period, when these new ideas were not fully accepted by the Frankish episcopate and the culture that would crystallise in the ‘Carolingian Renaissance’ was still in a nascent form. But even if Boniface himself struggled to be accepted by his peers, he left a solid and widespread legacy and through this

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<sup>53</sup> W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century*, (Oxford, 1946). For a more recent overview, see J.T. Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World, 690-900* (Turnhout, 2009).

<sup>54</sup> On whom, see the contributions to N.J. Higham (ed.), *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint* (Donington, 2013).

<sup>55</sup> J.T. Palmer, ‘Wilfrid and the Frisians’, in N.J. Higham (ed.), *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint* (Donington, 2013), pp. 231-42.

<sup>56</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 79-80. On Willibrord’s relations with the Pippinids, see R.A. Gerberding, ‘716: A Crucial Year for Charles Martel’, in J. Jarnut, U. Nonn and M. Richter (eds.), *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit* (Sigmaringen, 1994), pp. 205-16.

<sup>57</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 58-60.

became the first saint of the Carolingian period. He left behind disciples across the Frankish world; particularly prominent were Lull, his successor as bishop of Mainz, Sturm, first abbot of Fulda, and Gregory, abbot of the community at Utrecht.<sup>58</sup> The first and last of these men are the most important for our purposes,<sup>59</sup> Lull because of his role in creating the cult of Boniface and Gregory because of the Christian community he cultivated in Frisia, the emergence of which we will examine in our third chapter. Let us now explain more about the issues we shall address in this study.

### **The Purpose of this Study**

As we have seen, the history of the Franks in the early medieval period was complex and multi-faceted. Much modern scholarship has been concerned with attempting to provide a narrative of their historical trajectory; given the fragmentary, vague and often sparse nature of the surviving sources, this has not always been an easy task. Nevertheless, while certain details still and probably always will elude us, the overall narrative can be constructed with reasonable accuracy.<sup>60</sup> Recent scholarship has also been concerned with unravelling information about Frankish institutions, especially the political and religious (although the two are not always easily separable).<sup>61</sup> In this way, studies of the Franks reflect wider trends in early medieval scholarship.<sup>62</sup> What has often been neglected, though, is an assessment of how various Frankish authors conceived of their community and ‘others’. In a sense this is understandable, because no early medieval author explicitly talks about these terms in their modern sense. Nevertheless, there have been attempts to study early medieval communities and ‘others’, although these have tended to focus on specific

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<sup>58</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 61-73, 100-17.

<sup>59</sup> But on Sturm and Fulda, see J. Raaijmakers, *The Making of the Monastic Community of Fulda, c.744-c.900* (Cambridge, 2012).

<sup>60</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*; McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*.

<sup>61</sup> For example, P. Fouracre, ‘The Nature of Frankish Political Institutions in the Seventh Century’, in I.N. Wood (ed.), *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 285-316; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford, 1983).

<sup>62</sup> For example, the study of Visigothic laws; P.D. King, ‘King Chindasvind and the First Territorial Law-code of the Visigothic Kingdom’, in E. James (ed.), *Visigothic Spain; New Approaches* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 131-57.

case-studies, for example individual monastic communities or paganism as ‘the Other’ of Christianity.<sup>63</sup>

There is much to commend such studies, and they have done a great deal to further our understanding of the early medieval world; we shall draw on their approaches in our own study. In the present study, though, we shall attempt to take a wider perspective in order to shed light on how conceptions of community and otherness related to the long-term changes that took place in the *regnum Francorum* over the course of the seventh, eighth and early ninth centuries. Specifically, in our three chapters we shall address, respectively: how the concept of Frankish communal identity emerged as a discursive tool in the seventh century, and how successive authors wrote about the Franks, showing the changing understanding of the nature of the Frankish community; how a ‘discourse of otherness’ emerged in the eighth century as the Franks became more concerned with their relationship with the peripheral peoples and attempted to negotiate this relationship; and how one of these peripheral peoples – the Frisians – went from being portrayed as ‘other’ to becoming part of the wider Christian community and forged their own sense of local community. In doing this, we hope to show two things above all. First, conceptions of community and otherness were, in fact, closely linked in how peoples and the authors who wrote about them conceived of themselves. This is not necessarily a ground-breaking statement; after all, there must be outsiders for the community itself to exist. But the second thing we aim to show is the nuanced views early medieval authors had on these issues. To be sure, certain ideas held particular weight and dominated discourses at particular times – some even for the entire extent of our period of study. Yet we must be wary of attempting to paint too tidy a picture of supposedly wide-ranging cultural conceptions at any particular time. Let us give some examples.

Our two late Merovingian historians, Fredegar and the *LHF*-author both believed in the existence of a reasonably coherent Frankish *gens*, which each explained was descended from soldiers who had fled the city of Troy after its fall at the end of the Trojan War.<sup>64</sup> We can be reasonably certain, then, such an idea was fairly widespread in the Frankish world during this period; indeed, the Carolingians

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<sup>63</sup> For an example of the former, see Raaijmakers, *Fulda*; for the latter, see J.T. Palmer, ‘Defining Paganism in the Carolingian World’, *Early Medieval Europe*, 15 (2007), 402-425.

<sup>64</sup> Fredegar, ii.4-6, iii.2; *LHF*, 1-4.



and later Frankish/French authors had their own versions of this origin story. However, both Fredegar and the *LHF*-author told rather different versions of this story, and so we can see even if the concept of this origin for the Franks was believed, not everyone believed or knew precisely the same details. This is perhaps not too surprising, given these authors wrote at least seventy years apart: ideas change over time.

Similarly, the hostile depiction of the Saxons given by early Carolingian authors is well known: the Saxons were portrayed as rebellious pagans, completely beyond the pale of Carolingian society.<sup>65</sup> This was an understandable result of the drawn-out and extreme nature of Charlemagne's Saxon Wars, but looking closely at the contemporary sources shows different authors decided to portray the wars and the Saxons in rather different ways. A further example can be found in portrayals of the Frisian ruler Radbod, who appears as an antagonist of Franks and missionaries in several historical and hagiographical sources of the eighth and early ninth centuries,<sup>66</sup> all of which portray him with varying degrees of hostility or ambivalence: between them the authors of these sources could not even agree on his title. Similar trends can be found in contemporary portrayals of other important figures: in this study we shall also examine the variety in portrayals of Childeric III, Grifo and *dux* Tassilo of Bavaria.

By taking a wide perspective both chronologically and in terms of the sources, then, we seek to highlight such nuances, which – if they have been addressed at all – have tended to remain case-studies or only be touched on briefly.<sup>67</sup> But we also intend to explore the relationship between them and their greater context in order to show how these and other issues contributed to the understanding of the Frankish community and its others in the seventh, eighth and early ninth centuries. Yet even so, it is not possible to be completely comprehensive; certain issues, geographical areas and individuals from the period must remain outside our coverage. Above all, this remains a study of how early medieval authors wrote about

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<sup>65</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 772-804; *AMP*, s.a. 772-804; *Vita Karoli*, 7.

<sup>66</sup> *LHF*, 49-52; *Continuationes*, 6-10; *Vita Bonifatii*, 4; *Vita Willibrordi*, 5, 9.

<sup>67</sup> J. Barlow, 'Gregory of Tours and the Myth of the Trojan Origins of the Franks', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 29 (1995), 86-95. R. Flierman, 'Gens perfida or populus Christianus? Saxon (in)fidelity in Frankish historical writing', in C. Gantner, R. McKitterick and S. Meeder (eds), *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Forthcoming). I.N. Wood, 'Saint-Wandrille and its Hagiography', in I.N. Wood and G.A. Loud (eds), *Church and Chronicle in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to John Taylor* (London, 1991), pp. 1-14, at p. 14.

these things, not an attempt to recreate the realities of life in the period. We shall address how individual Franks (and non-Franks) wrote about their community, but not how Frankish identity was constructed or performed outside the texts. We shall examine Christian perceptions of paganism, but not attempt to construct a picture of genuine early medieval paganism.<sup>68</sup> In other words, this shall remain a text-based study that focusses on a number of primarily narrative sources. Let us turn to these sources, then, and highlight some of the issues they themselves present to the modern audience and scholar.

### **Texts and Identities: The Sources and What They Can Tell Us**

Any study of community or otherness (or in our case, both) is inherently a study of identity, whether relating to the identity of the protagonists of antagonists of the sources being examined. Identity has been one of the topics most discussed by the last few generations of early medieval scholarship, represented above all by the ‘Vienna School’ of ethnogenesis:<sup>69</sup> the leading proponent of the School in recent years has been Walter Pohl, who has contributed much to the study and understanding of the construction of late antique and early medieval identity.<sup>70</sup> Crucially, the ‘Vienna School’ utilises a combination of archaeological and textual evidence; it is, of course, on the latter we shall focus here. The interpretation of textual evidence since the second half of the twentieth century has been particularly influenced by the post-modernism and post-structuralism of the so-called ‘Linguistic Turn’, a philosophical movement which stresses the separation of language and reality. The implication of this for the discipline of history is our sources are not simply mines of information from which a grand narrative can be created, although the extremes of the ‘Linguistic Turn’ have been tempered by acknowledging the sources can still tell us a great deal about their authors and the contexts in which

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<sup>68</sup> If this can be done at all, it will be most profitable to adopt the approach used by P. Shaw, *Uses of Wodan: The Development of his Cult and of Medieval Literary Responses to It* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2002). See also I.N. Wood, ‘Pagan Religions and Superstitions East of the Rhine from the Fifth to the Ninth Century’, in Ausenda, G. (ed.), *After Empire: Toward’s an Ethnology of Europe’s Barbarians* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 253-79.

<sup>69</sup> The origins of the ‘School’ can be found in Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*.

<sup>70</sup> The most recent assessment of the development of the study of early medieval identity and its current state can be found in W. Pohl, ‘Introduction – Strategies of Identification: A Methodological Profile’, in Pohl and Heydemann, *Strategies of Identification: Ethnicity and Religion in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 1-64.

they were written. The discipline of History, then, has – for the most part – not seen the ‘Death of the Author’ found in some other fields.

In addition to his contributions to the study of ethnogenesis, Pohl has also been one of the leaders of the application of this ‘post-modern’ approach to the study of the early medieval period. He and his colleagues Regine le Jan, Mayke de Jong, Rosamond McKitterick and Ian Wood have championed the ‘Texts and Identities’ approach, which – as well as furthering new attitudes to manuscript studies – stresses the need to see sources as contributions to contemporary discourse on identity, the process of identification and the perception of difference that took place between specific social, political and religious communities.<sup>71</sup> This has a great significance for our own study. Each of our authors offers an individual perspective, even when writing about the same events or issues as other authors. Yet this individual perspective was still informed by the social context in which the author lived and wrote. Each author thus had a two-way relationship with his or her context and audience. The author would be informed by social context, but could also inform that context and shape it. If there was a cultural assumption the Franks were descended from Trojans or the Saxons were rebellious pagans, the author would likely share this assumption, and so write about it, but through the act of writing the author could lay out his or her opinion for the audience, thus shaping the way such issues would be perceived.

For this study, we shall focus on two types of sources: historical narratives, that is chronicles, histories and annals (with one ‘secular’ biography); and saints’ *Lives*, which are also narrative sources, but tell their stories in a very different way than do the other types of sources mentioned. Where possible, we shall also supplement the information found in these sources with other material, particularly from contemporary letters and law codes. Let us now address the issues facing any study of these types of sources and say a bit more about the specific texts to be studied.

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<sup>71</sup> See M. de Jong, R. McKitterick, W. Pohl and I.N. Wood, ‘Introduction’, in R. Corradini, R. Meens, C. Pössel and P. Shaw (eds), *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 2004), pp. 11-13.

## Historical narratives

Sources which ostensibly provide an account for a given period are the traditional ‘meat’ of historical research, since they provide the most ostensibly straightforward information for the historian who wishes to construct a narrative of what happened in the past. The approaches outlined above caution us against such an attitude to our sources, and one of the important developments of recent scholarship has been the re-assessment of sources traditionally labelled ‘reliable’ – for example the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours – or ‘unreliable’ – for example, Fredegar’s *Chronicle* or *LHF*.<sup>72</sup> This is not necessarily to put greater weight on the information found in the latter or less on that found in the former; rather, we must accept every author had his or her own biases or restrictions in which to work. Fortunately, we are not attempting to construct a grand narrative in this study, and so we can look at what these authors say without worrying about ‘reliability’ – the information gleaned will simply tell us what an individual chose to say about a given topic.<sup>73</sup> It is, however, worth considering the different kinds of narrative sources with which we shall be dealing.

Chronicles, of which our examples are Fredegar’s *Chronicle* and the so-called *Continuations* made to it in the eighth century, aim ostensibly at providing the audience with a universal history, that is a complete history of the entire world from Creation to some endpoint of the author’s choosing – usually a year near that when he or she was writing. Of course, such a lofty goal is rarely realised, even in the case of Fredegar, who keeps the audience reasonably well-informed about matters in the East but shows an increasingly Frankish – and more specifically Burgundian and Austrasian – focus towards the end of his *Chronicle*. Histories tend to have a more specific focus. Gregory of Tours’s *Histories* – which we shall only allude to occasionally in this study – narrate the history of the Gallic Church, while *Liber Historiae Francorum*, as its name suggests, narrates the history of the Franks. Annals, meanwhile, provide a more ‘bare bones’ narrative, although one which may have a narrow or wide focus depending on the author. They list events rather strictly by year; in some cases this could be as simple as recording a high-profile death or where the king spent Easter, while in others it could be a reasonably detailed outline of a military campaign.

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<sup>72</sup> For a comparison of the treatment of these sources, see Gerberding, *Rise*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>73</sup> Examples of such studies which focus on Fredegar and *LHF* are I.N. Wood, ‘Fredegar’s Fables’, in A. Scharer and G. Scheibelreiter (eds), *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter* (Vienna, 1994), pp. 359–66; Gerberding, *Rise*.

All of these types of sources had long traditions behind them by the late Merovingian period, although it is interesting to note apparent trends in the types of sources written at particular times. Thus, from the Merovingian period we have Chronicles and Histories, but these gave way to a great outpouring of annalistic writing in the late eighth century, which continued to dominate through the Carolingian period, although this should not, of course, suggest only these types of sources were written at these times. Indeed, some sources do not fit comfortably within modern attempts at genre definition, partly because authors borrowed from earlier sources and did not necessarily fully adapt what they found to their own style. *AMP*, for example, appear as a fairly straightforward set of annals for most of their length, but begin with an account of the rise of Pippin II which does not stick to an annalistic structure and has a ‘heroic’ feel rather different from the usually ‘Spartan’ feel of other annals.<sup>74</sup>

#### The *Chronicle of Fredegar* and the *Continuations*

The earliest of the sources on which we shall focus in this study is one of the most problematic from a historiographical point of view. Despite the implication of the name, the author of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* is unknown, as are the date and place of composition, and much scholarship of the past century regarding the text has been concerned with these questions. There was no ‘Fredegar’ – the attribution dates from the sixteenth century – and debates have raged between those who believed the source had multiple authors and those who believed it had one.<sup>75</sup> A sort of consensus has been reached on this issue by modern scholarship, even if it remains only vaguely and inconsistently put forward from one scholar to another: the *Chronicle* as it has come down to us probably represents a compilation of older materials put together by an author (but possibly a group of authors) probably working in

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<sup>74</sup> *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 334-7.

<sup>75</sup> A debate begun by B. Krusch, ‘Die Chronicae des sogenannten Fredegar’, *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 7 (1882), 247-351, 421-516, who argued for multiple authorship. The opposition was led by F. Lot ‘Encore la Chronique du Pseudo-Frédégaire’, *Revue Historique*, 115 (1914), 305-337, who outlined an argument for single authorship. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (ed. and trans.), *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations* (London, 1960), pp. xiv-xx, provides an overview of the development of this debate, followed by his own argument in favour of multiple authorship (pp. xxi-xxv).

Burgundy, probably c.660.<sup>76</sup> Because of this, and for convenience, we shall refer throughout this study to a ‘Fredegar’ as the author-compiler of the text because, as we shall see, this person seems to have chosen to present a reasonably coherent set of material to his or her audience.

The *Chronicle* contains an abridgment of the *Liber Generationis* written by Hippolytus in the third century, a version of the *Chronicle* of Eusebius-Jerome from the fifth century, an abbreviation of the *Chronicle* of Hydatius also from the fifth century and the six-book version of Gregory of Tours’s *Histories*, before coming to an original section covering the years 584-642; most of the sections before the original part are interpolated with additions, and there is evidence Fredegar made use of other sources, both known and unknown to modern scholarship.<sup>77</sup> In the modern edition, this material is divided into four books, with the *Liber Generationis* forming the first, Eusebius-Jerome and Hydatius the second, Gregory the third and the original section the fourth. We shall primarily be concerned with Book Four here because this tells us the most about the compiler’s perception of his community, but we shall have cause to refer to some of the interpolations, particularly those regarding the Trojan origin story. While the main narrative of the original section runs to c.642, it appears to be unfinished because it does not fully resolve the last stories being told and because the compiler refers to events of the 650s which are not returned to;<sup>78</sup> this evidence gives us the date of c.660 for the final compilation of the *Chronicle*.

Closely associated with Fredegar’s *Chronicle* are the so-called *Continuations*. These are a set of information added to the original *Chronicle* over the course of the eighth century, but they should actually be seen as a separate compilation in their own right, for which Roger Collins has suggested the name *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*.<sup>79</sup> As a compilation, the *Continuations* share similar problems with Fredegar’s *Chronicle*, specifically the issue of authorship, date and location. One manuscript suggests the compilation was begun under the auspices of Childebrand, the brother of Charles Martel, which brought the narrative to 751, and

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<sup>76</sup> See W. Goffart, ‘The Fredegar Problem Reconsidered’, *Speculum*, 38 (1963), 206-41; R. Collins, ‘Fredegar’, in P.J. Geary (ed.), *Authors of the Middle Ages*, IV, 12-13 (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 73-138, at pp. 91-6; R. Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken* (Hanover, 2007), pp. 8-25.

<sup>77</sup> For a comprehensive survey, see Collins, *Fredegar-Chroniken*, pp. 25-55.

<sup>78</sup> Fredegar, iv.81-2.

<sup>79</sup> Collins, *Fredegar-Chroniken*, pp. 82-132.

was then continued under Childebrand's son, Nibelung, down to 768.<sup>80</sup> This provides a neat attribution which gives both a chronological time and an authorship by someone close to the emerging Carolingian court. Yet it does not solve the issue of how many compilers worked on the text; potentially one man or woman could have worked under both Childebrand and Nibelung, but it just as easily could have been multiple authors working under both. At the same time, the colophon that provides the attribution to Childebrand and Nibelung only appears in a single tenth-century manuscript, so it cannot be taken as conclusive. We also do not know enough to say for certain the compilation was not created as a single effort in or shortly after 768.<sup>81</sup> For the purpose of this study, we shall apply a similar logic to that already given for 'Fredegar': we shall refer throughout to a single 'Fredegar's continuator' as if there was a single author who brought together the whole text, even if he or she did so by combining earlier materials.

Part of Collins's logic for seeing the *Continuations* as a source in their own right, rather than simply additions to an earlier text, is the manuscripts which contain the *Continuations* preserve an altered version of Fredegar's *Chronicle*, with some sections removed and others added;<sup>82</sup> of the additions, the most noteworthy for us is the *Historia Daretis Frigii de origine Francorum*, a reworked version of Dares the Phrygian's *De Excidio Troiae Historia* that adds material about the origin of Franks in the Fall of Troy. The 'original' section of the *Continuations* covers the period c.642 to the accession of Charlemagne and Carloman after the death of Pippin III in 768. For the first part of this the continuator used an altered version of the last ten chapters of *LHF*;<sup>83</sup> some of these alterations will be relevant to our study. The rest of the text provides a narrative for the reigns of Charles Martel, Carloman and Pippin III, focussing above all on their external wars of conquest against peripheral peoples. As we shall see, the continuator also glosses over some important contemporary events, such as Grifo's involvement in the wars of the 740s and the deposition of Childeric III that allowed Pippin to become king.

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<sup>80</sup> *Continuationes*, 34. For discussion, see Wallace-Hadrill, *Fredegar*, pp. xxv-xxviii.

<sup>81</sup> See Goosmann, *Memorable Crises*, pp. 49-53.

<sup>82</sup> Collins, *Fredegar-Chroniken*, pp. 82-9.

<sup>83</sup> *Continuationes*, 1-10.

*Liber Historiae Francorum*

*LHF* is in many ways a much simpler text to deal with than either Fredegar's *Chronicle* or the *Continuations*, and has not been the subject of such lengthy debates about authorship. In fact, the author of the text tells us the text was written in the sixth year of the reign of the Theuderic IV – 727 – and there seems to be no reason to doubt this.<sup>84</sup> This is not to say there have not been debates about *LHF*, of course. The location and gender of the author have been topics of discussion,<sup>85</sup> although these do not impinge on our study; what is important is the author was a Neustrian writing during the reign of Theuderic IV. Likewise, *LHF* apparently offers a much more internally coherent and straightforward narrative than Fredegar's *Chronicle*, if only because it has a narrower focus. Like Fredegar, the *LHF*-author was reliant on the six-book version of Gregory's *Histories* for a significant portion of his own text, although like Fredegar he also made alterations to Gregory's account.<sup>86</sup>

Unlike Gregory and Fredegar, the *LHF*-author began his narrative not with the creation of the world, but with the origin of the Franks and their kings,<sup>87</sup> and this Frankish focus remains explicit throughout the text, although by *Franci* the author actually meant the Neustrians, a point to which we shall return. Even this supposedly straight-forward narrative has been a subject of debate, though. The opening of the text together with various 'heroic' or 'legendary' elements scattered throughout meant the text was for a long time seen as secular, and the author as having had little interest in religious matters.<sup>88</sup> This view has now been revised, with Philipp Dörler in particular emphasising the religious elements present in the text.<sup>89</sup> We should, of course, not emphasise one side over the other, but rather see the author as working in a milieu in which such combinations of 'secular' and 'religious' material were completely acceptable. For all this, it is interesting to note

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<sup>84</sup> *LHF*, 53.

<sup>85</sup> See Gerberding, *Rise*, pp. 152-3, where the author argues for Soissons against Krusch's argument for Rouen and Kurth's for Saint-Denis; all assumed a male author, but see J.N. Nelson, 'Gender and Genre in Women Historians of the Early Middle Ages', in J.L. Nelson (ed.), *The Frankish World, 750-900* (London, 1996), pp. 183-97, at p. 195 arguing for the possibility of female authorship.

<sup>86</sup> See Gerberding, *Rise*, pp. 31-46.

<sup>87</sup> *LHF*, 1-4.

<sup>88</sup> Gerberding, *Rise*, especially pp. 159-72.

<sup>89</sup> P. Dörler, 'The *Liber Historiae Francorum* – a Model for a New Frankish Self-confidence', *Networks and Neighbours*, 1 (2013), 23-43.



*LHF* was probably the most widely read Frankish historical narrative source of the medieval period.<sup>90</sup>

### The Carolingian Annals and the *Life of Charlemagne*

Most of the historical narrative sources produced in the early Carolingian period form a reasonably cohesive group because the second half of the eighth century saw a renewed interest in the writing of history, and more specifically in the writing of annals. Because these sources list events by year, they do not form narrative accounts in the same sense as the sources we have just looked at, but in them events can be traced in chronological order. The historiography of annals as a genre – and particularly of the Carolingian annals – is complex.<sup>91</sup> Many individual annalistic collections are known, but many borrow from one another, and it is not always easy or possible to tell whether entries were made year-by-year or all at once in a single year. While there are many sets of annals from the eighth century, most provide little more than brief summaries of events. For this study, we shall therefore focus primarily on two of the more substantial sets of annals; the *Annales Regni Francorum* and the *Annales Mettenses Priores*. Both sets of annals are believed to have been composed at or close to the Frankish royal court, or with significant oversight from important members of the court. They also share much common material for the period 741-814, with which we shall be concerned here.

*ARF* exist in two versions; the ‘original’ version covers the period 741-788 and was composed c.790 before being continued, probably at various stages, to 829; the ‘revised’ version covers the period 741-812 and contains a highly edited, though similar account, composed c.814.<sup>92</sup> *ARF* were continued in three sets of ninth-century annals: *Annales Bertiniani*, *Annales Fuldenses* and *Annales Xantenses*, to which we shall turn briefly in chapter three. *AMP* cover the period c.675-805, when they were composed possibly at the monastery of Chelles under the direction of

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<sup>90</sup> Gerberding, *Rise*, especially p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> For the traditional view of annals as having grown out of Easter Table compilations in a linear development, see M. McCormick, *Les annales du haut Moyen Âge* (Turnhout, 1975). For a refutation of this, with an emphasis on the influence of multiple sources in the development of the annals and a case-study of *ARF*, see R. McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 97-111.

<sup>92</sup> On the dating of both versions, see R. Collins, ‘The ‘Reviser’ Revisited: Another Look at the Alternative Versions of the *Annales Regni Francorum*’, in A.C. Murray (ed.), *After Rome’s Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History* (Toronto, 1998), pp. 191-213.

Charlemagne's sister Gisela. Like *ARF*, they were later continued to 829. When we combine these two sets of annals with the account found in the *Continuations*, we find what appears at first glance to be a relatively clear vision of the Carolingian world-view. As we shall see, though, what we actually have is something far more valuable, because comparing these sources allows us to see how this world-view emerged and developed over a period of roughly forty years between the reign of Pippin III and the first decade after Charlemagne's imperial coronation.

To this comparison, we can add a fourth text, Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne*, which is almost unique in being an early medieval biography of a secular ruler, as well as being the only one of our historical narratives for which we can name the author with certainty. The *Life* is clearly a piece of propaganda designed to glorify Charlemagne, written by a man who was involved in court life towards the end of his reign. Yet exactly what purpose this propaganda served, and when it was written, has been the subject of some debate. Traditionally it was thought to have been written in the last decade of Louis the Pious's reign, when he was at his low ebb, as a criticism of the emperor who had failed to live up to his father's glorious standards. More recently, though, Matthew Innes and Rosamond McKitterick convincingly argued for an earlier date of c.817, and for seeing it as a support for Louis's claim to sole rulership of the Carolingian empire.<sup>93</sup> What we have in the *Life* is the work of an author looking back on the Carolingian triumph and writing about the man who brought it to its zenith: his world-view was similar to that found in the annals and the *Continuations*, but again, there were subtle differences in his attitudes to certain individuals or events.

### **Saints' Lives**

The genre of hagiography – writing about the holy – is one of the most substantial, wide-ranging and widely produced of the medieval period, with the many saints' *Lives* attesting to the popularity and creativity of the genre.<sup>94</sup> The early medieval period in fact saw the establishment of an incredible number of saints' cults, and the

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<sup>93</sup> For the original argument, see M. Innes and R. McKitterick, 'The Writing of History', in R. McKitterick (ed.), *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 193-220, at pp. 203-8. For a restatement, see McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 7-14. See also McKitterick, *History and Memory*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>94</sup> See the contributions to J. Howard-Johnston and P.A. Hayward (eds), *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown* (Oxford, 1999).

emergence of the ‘Cult of Saints’ has been rightly seen as one of the most important cultural developments of the late antique and early medieval periods.<sup>95</sup>

The saint’s *Life* often represented an important tool in establishing the posthumous cult. Because of this there exists an extraordinary variety of such texts, but the genre was highly susceptible to reliance on *topoi*. This traditionally saw saints’ *Lives* relegated to a secondary place after the historical narrative texts when it came to the reconstruction of events in the period. This attitude has been revised, and saints’ *Lives* are now accepted for what they can tell us as texts rather than simply being used to find information to supplement that from the historical narratives (although as we shall see, these two groups of texts must still often be used in combination). Merovingian Francia was actually the largest early medieval producer of saints’ *Lives*, and while many of the texts that have come down to us are not without their problems, much recent scholarship on them highlights the contributions these texts make to our understanding of the politics, culture and society of the region and period;<sup>96</sup> due to the scope of our study, we shall only be able to concentrate on some of the more prominent political texts. The Carolingian period saw a continued output of saints’ *Lives*, especially the re-writing of the lives of late antique saints<sup>97</sup> and the creation of new cults for the missionary saints working across the Rhine; we shall focus here on a select group of the latter.

#### Late Merovingian ‘political’ saints

At first glance, many of the figures chosen for sanctification in the seventh century appear unlikely candidates for the process. While most were bishops, abbots or nuns, all were deeply involved in the political disagreements that took place during their lives, and their involvement in secular affairs puts them at a far cry from the martyrs and confessors of Late Antiquity. Bishop Leudegar of Autun, for example, was knee-deep in the tribulations that overtook the *regnum Francorum* in the mid-670s, even if his biographer did his best to make the bishop appear as a persecuted

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<sup>95</sup> Seminal to this line of thought is P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981).

<sup>96</sup> For example, I.N. Wood, ‘The *Vita Columbani* and Merovingian Hagiography’, *Peritia*, 1 (1982), 63-80; P. Fouracre, ‘Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography’, *Past and Present*, 127 (1990), 3-38; *Late Merovingian France*.

<sup>97</sup> See G. Vocino, ‘Under the Aegis of the Saints. Hagiography and Power in Early Carolingian Northern Italy’, *Early Medieval Europe*, 22 (2014), 26-52.

martyr.<sup>98</sup> The queen-turned-nun, Balthild, meanwhile, appears much closer to a model of good queenship and chaste sanctity, but even she was not immune from political turmoil; her biographer simply did a better job of hiding it, although not a good enough job to stand up to modern scrutiny.<sup>99</sup> The *Passio Leudegarii*, the *Lives* written about Audoin of Rouen<sup>100</sup> and Aunemund of Lyons<sup>101</sup> and the *Passio Praejecti*<sup>102</sup> show us just how involved bishops were in the political processes of the Merovingian kingdom in the seventh century. Equally importantly, they also show us how memories about such men could be negotiated after their deaths. In this sense they have a great deal to tell us about how their authors conceived of their community, how it functioned and what were thought to be important attributes for its leaders.

#### Early Carolingian missionaries

We hear less from hagiography about the bishops of the early Carolingian period. This is not to suggest we know less about them than their late Merovingian counterparts, but we learn about them from other sources. Saints' *Lives* are, however, our main source of information about the missionaries who worked across the Rhine in the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>103</sup> Such men were perhaps more suitable candidates for sanctification than those who became the subjects of saints' *Lives* in the earlier period, since they worked towards the goal of spreading Christianity, or at least promoting a 'correct' version of Christianity if not actually converting pagans. Like other saints, the missionaries who became the subjects of these texts were potential examples for the rest of society, although in this case they perhaps had a narrower target audience: usually other missionaries. Just as with other saints' *Lives*, those written about missionaries were at least partly about negotiating the memory of the subject, presenting an idealised version of events and smoothing over any potentially controversial aspects of the saint's career: we shall see this in particular when we address *Vita Bonifatii* in chapter two. The nature of missionary work was

<sup>98</sup> For discussion of the text, see *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 194-215.

<sup>99</sup> For discussion of the text, see *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 97-118.

<sup>100</sup> *Vita Audoini*, ed. W. Levison, *MGH SRM*, 5 (Hanover, 1910), pp. 536-67. See *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 133-52.

<sup>101</sup> *Acta Sancti Aunemundi alias Dalfini Episcopi*, P. Perrier (ed.), *AASS*, 7 Sept. (Antwerp, 1760), 744-6. See *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 166-79.

<sup>102</sup> *Passio Praejecti*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM*, 5 (Hanover, 1910), pp. 212-48. See *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 254-70.

<sup>103</sup> See Wood, *Missionary Life*.

just as open for debate as any other aspect of a saint's life, and in these texts we can see such debates taking place: writing about missionaries was a way to show one's audience the 'correct' version of what a missionary should be doing. Although this is present to a degree in all our missionary *Lives*, we can see it most clearly in those written about Boniface, Willibrord and Wulfram, and we shall examine this aspect of these texts in chapter three. At the same time, missionaries were in some ways founding figures for the Christian communities that emerged across the Rhine in their wake, and as we shall see in chapter three, writing about these men was also a way of outlining the nature of the new communities, not least in terms of their relationship with the wider Frankish world; we shall examine this with regard to the *Lives* written about Gregory of Utrecht and Liudger in Frisia in the ninth century.

### **Community and Otherness: Definition of Terms**

The terms 'community' and 'otherness' will recur throughout this study, so it is worth laying out exactly what we mean by them, especially since they are terms which are now widely used in the study of history. To begin with community; a community can be defined as a group of individuals who share some identifying feature and either live in close proximity or – especially in a modern context – interact on a regular basis through various media. In medieval studies, the term is most often utilised to refer to a specific group, for example a monastic community or the inhabitants of a particular town or city.<sup>104</sup> Yet the term can easily have a wider application. The concept of ethnogenesis, for example, is directly related to the emergence of an ethnic community: that is, a group defined by common ethnic identity. Because membership of a community and membership of an ethnic group are both related to one's identification with a wider group, we can take the model proposed by Pohl for the study of ethnic identity and apply it to our own study. Specifically, we can say communal identity – like ethnic identity – is built up through 'a circuit of communication that determines which features... will be used or imagined as markers of... identity'.<sup>105</sup> Of the features mentioned by Pohl, the most important for our purposes are: actual or notional common origin; a shared

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<sup>104</sup> For example, W.E. Klingshern, *Caesarius of Arles and the Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge, 1994); Raaijmakers, *Fulda*.

<sup>105</sup> Pohl, 'Strategies of Identification', p. 3.

memory of the past; common territory; and (religious) beliefs; to which we can also add common rulership.

The phrase ‘imagined as markers of... identity’, however, brings us to an important point, because the notions of community we shall examine here are, ultimately, imagined. In his seminal work on modern nationalism, Benedict Anderson outlined how modern nation-states emerged as ‘imagined’ communities.<sup>106</sup> While the existence of nations and states in the medieval period has been much debated, we can see some similarities between the way Anderson approaches his imagined communities and the way Pohl approaches identity.<sup>107</sup> For example, Anderson explains how many of the nations which emerged from colonial territories, especially in South America, did so through shared notions of common origin, common territory and common rulership (whether the old colonial rulers or the new local rulers) on the part of the locals. The way these locals constructed their imagined community represents Pohl’s ‘circuit of communication’ and the creation of a shared memory of the past. Whether or not nation-states existed in the pre-modern world, we can see similar processes at work in our sources. Because the kingdoms of early medieval Western Europe emerged from constructed and imagined ethnic groupings, the communities of these kingdoms were themselves constructed and imagined.

Let us be clear: our authors and their audiences may have perceived themselves as ‘Franks’, but ‘Frankishness’ – that is, membership of the Frankish community – could only be defined through a sense each individual shared with his or her peers a common ancestry and rulers, inhabited the same territory and (in the Carolingian rather than the Merovingian community) shared religious beliefs. In other words, the Frankish community was constructed through the shared participation of its members in an imagined memory of the past – both distant and recent. In our present study, we shall see the contributions made to this shared imagination by certain authors of the period. As explained above, even if we cannot be sure these authors represent exactly how their audiences perceived the community, we can be fairly sure they represent commonly held views.

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<sup>106</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York, 1983).

<sup>107</sup> For this kind of approach to later medieval kingdoms as communities, see S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (Oxford, 1984), especially pp. 250-61.

But because the Franks were often in the position of ruling over non-Franks during this period, imagining the community of the *regnum Francorum* was more complicated than simply imagining the Frankish community. On the one hand was the purely Frankish community, defined by the relationships between the various sub-groups which made up the *gens Francorum*. On the other hand were the relationships between the Franks and the peripheral peoples. This is an important distinction to make. The existence of the *gens Francorum* was not in question by the seventh century, and authors could write as if such a single, unified people existed and had a shared, common history. But by the middle of the seventh century, there also existed fairly clearly defined divisions within the *regnum* and the *gens*. There could be no denying the inhabitants of the *Teilreiche* were Franks, but the existence of groups defined as much by geographical location as membership of a *gens* meant authors writing about the *regnum* had to negotiate what these identities meant in terms of the cohesion of the Frankish community. As we shall see, all our authors attempted to stress this cohesion, but they all took different approaches to the existence of the sub-groups.

The relationship between the Franks and the peripheral peoples was even more difficult to negotiate, though. These peoples were not Franks, so could never be part of a community based on Frankish identity (whatever that meant). But at the same time, they were ruled by Frankish kings and were involved in Frankish political affairs, so they and the Franks were all part of a single community on some level. This appears to have been enough for earlier authors, and these relationships as well as the nature of this community remained only vaguely defined in the Merovingian period. For Carolingian authors, however, the nature of this community was more complex precisely because during the eighth century the Franks began to define their relationship with the peripheries more clearly in terms of loyalty to the Carolingian dynasty and in terms of Christianity. In this context, rebellion against the Carolingians or refusal to accept their version of Christianity placed the rebels or pagans in question outside the community. For this reason, the way authors of the eighth and early ninth centuries wrote about the peripheral peoples can be called ‘a discourse of otherness’, so let us now address what we mean by our ‘otherness’.

For Hegel, who introduced the terms to modern philosophical discourse, ‘the Other’ and ‘Otherness’ were inherent to self-identification: one cannot understand

who or what one is without understanding who or what one is not.<sup>108</sup> The idea of ‘the Other’ as it has come to be used in the study of history was first and most comprehensively explored by Edward Said in his seminal study of the Western invention of and discourse about ‘the Orient’.<sup>109</sup> Since its publication, Said’s *Orientalism* has been much debated and criticised,<sup>110</sup> but it still exerts a great influence over the way in which historians engage with the idea of ‘the Other’. Said’s Other is an imagined outsider, beyond the knowledge – and perhaps even the understanding – of those who write about it. Thus – in his study – western authors imagined an Orient which was equal parts mysterious, exotic and dangerous, but always ancient and unchanging. Despite the criticisms, there is something to commend Said’s approach; the concept of an imagined Other would surely complement our idea of an imagined community. This is generally how historians who have worked with the notion of the Other have used it: the Other is outside, always ‘Them’, never ‘Us’, and is written about by those who do not necessarily understand it, or even try to.<sup>111</sup>

This is a neat system, but perhaps a little too simplistic for what we shall find in our sources, hence the decision to use ‘otherness’ rather than ‘the Other’. Where ‘the Other’ implies uniformity and unknowability, we shall use ‘otherness’ to highlight ambiguity and ambivalence, both in the relationship between the outsiders and the community and in our ability to assess what authors actually knew about those they set up as outsiders.<sup>112</sup> We shall see authors relied on certain *topoi* in the way they wrote about the peripheral peoples: the Carolingians undertook their wars

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<sup>108</sup> For an overview, see P.J. Kain, ‘Self-Consciousness, the Other and Hegel’s Dialectic of Recognition: Alternative to a Postmodern Subterfuge.’ *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 24 (1998), 105-26.

<sup>109</sup> E.W. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978).

<sup>110</sup> For example, J. Clifford, ‘On *Orientalism*’, in J. Clifford (ed.), *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), pp. 225-76; R. Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London and New York, 1990). For an overview of such criticisms and a defence of Said’s theory, see V. Li, ‘Edward Said’s Untidiness’, *Postcolonial Text*, 1 (2004).

<sup>111</sup> For example, S. Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford, 1991). D. Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Exeter, 1996).

<sup>112</sup> Allowing for this kind of ambiguity was first suggested in Homi Bhabha’s criticism and development of Said’s theory of Orientalism. See, for example, H.K. Bhabha ‘The Other Question... Homi K. Bhabha Reconsiders the Stereotype and Colonial Discourse’, *Screen*, 24.6 (1983), 18-36. Bhabha himself has the tendency to be as monolithic and reductive as Said, though, albeit in a different way; see, for example, the approach to a single ‘colonial’ discourse outlined in H.K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York, 1994). Ian Wood has adopted an approach which highlights ambiguity and ambivalence when assessing how early medieval authors presented pagans and paganism; see I.N. Wood, ‘The Pagans and the Other: Varying Presentations in the Early Middle Ages’, *Networks and Neighbours*, 1 (2013), 1-22.



of expansion and conquest because the peripheral peoples – and particularly their rulers – refused to recognise Frankish authority – they were rebels, and there was no attempt to understand or discuss the perspective from the other side. This would seem at first glance to be the creation of a rebellious ‘Other’; the descriptions of the Saxons as inherently rebellious in particular seems to tie-in to Said’s notion of timelessness in the presentation and perception of the Other.

Yet we shall also see authors had some degree of versatility and individuality in how they presented these ‘rebels’. Moreover, the idea these peoples were in rebellion highlights they were thought to be part of the community, back into which the Carolingians were attempting to bring them. Likewise pagans and paganism, arguably the true ‘Other’ of the Christians, from a theological perspective, as well from the perspective of holding a completely separate world-view,<sup>113</sup> were not truly ‘Other’: eighth-century churchmen attempted to define paganism as a set of practices and beliefs that would not be tolerated in the community, but in doing this they displayed their knowledge of such practices and beliefs. And just as the Carolingians were working to bring rebels back into the fold, so missionaries were working to bring pagans to Christianity. Pagans and rebels, then, were inherently excluded from the community by their refusals to accept Carolingian social mores.<sup>114</sup> But this exclusion was not indefinite, nor were rebels and pagans portrayed uniformly by all those who wrote about them. In our context, ‘otherness’ describes a sense of purposefully promoted exclusion, but an exclusion which could be overcome. With our key terms explained, let us begin our study.

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<sup>113</sup> Palmer, ‘Defining Paganism’.

<sup>114</sup> On the importance of defined social mores for distinguishing ‘the Other’, see M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 1996).

## Chapter 1

### Imagining the Frankish Community

#### 1.1 The Emergence of Frankish Identity

The Franks were one of, if not the most successful of the barbarian peoples that created kingdoms in Western Europe from the fifth century onwards. Unlike most of the other peoples that established their power in the late- and post-Roman period, the Franks extended their rule over other peoples – albeit loosely – and by the end of the sixth century this had become an explicit part of their power, and of the way in which the *regnum Francorum* was conceived. Yet the Franks were the chief focus for authors writing about Frankish history in the late Merovingian period, and the well-being of the Frankish community was their chief concern. As we shall see, the degree to which authors focussed on the Franks varied, but even Fredegar, an author who was particularly concerned with events outside the *regnum*, used the Franks as the central thread running through the narrative of the Third and Fourth books of his *Chronicle*.

As we have already seen, the first author to provide the Franks – or at least their kings – with a prominent role in history was Gregory of Tours in his *Decem libri historiarum*. This work has often misleadingly been referred to as *The History of the Franks* in modern Anglophone scholarship,<sup>1</sup> but while they feature prominently, the Franks were not of particular concern to Gregory, except to show where they fitted into the history of the Christian community of Gaul.<sup>2</sup> It is the latter that forms the axis about which the world of the *Histories* turns and as such the Franks who feature in his work tend to be important individuals such as kings; but even the Merovingians were presented by Gregory as *reges Galliae*, rather than specifically as *reges Francorum*.<sup>3</sup>

While this may appear to have given the Merovingians a central place of authority in Gregory's community, it also subsumed them into his Christian

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<sup>1</sup> For example, L. Thorpe (trans.), *History of the Franks* (Harmondsworth, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> E. James, 'Gregory of Tours and the Franks', in A.C. Murray (ed.), *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History* (Toronto, 1998), pp. 51-66, at pp. 51-66.

<sup>3</sup> H. Reimitz, *Writing for the Future. History, Identity, and Ethnicity in the Frankish World (550-850)* (Forthcoming).

community and made them just one of its constituent parts. The *Franci* as a collective group, then, have very little active role in Gregory's work. Indeed, the bishop may have been actively trying to suppress the emerging concept of a Frankish communal identity, a point to which we shall return.<sup>4</sup> Yet Gregory's *Histories* formed the foundation for those who followed him in writing about the Frankish kingdoms via a six-book version of his text that dropped the last four books entirely and excised much of the ecclesiastical material that had been so important to Gregory's purpose. This was not necessarily an attempt to make the *Histories* more 'Frankish' or 'secular', but it certainly served the purpose of authors who were more concerned with the Frankish community than Gregory had been.<sup>5</sup>

When we turn to the sources of the seventh and early eighth century which shall be our focus for most of this chapter, we can see a rather different conception of history, despite their reliance on Gregory's work. This difference is most striking in *Liber Historiae Francorum*, a text whose author placed the Franks at the very heart of his work.<sup>6</sup> In fact, despite relying on Gregory for much of the narrative,<sup>7</sup> it is clear right from the start *LHF* is about the Frankish community, and the communal identity of the Franks is one of the most important features of the text. Throughout the narrative, the author displays those features which both Pohl and Anderson categorised as central to promoting an imagined sense of community. The text opens not with the creation of the world,<sup>8</sup> but with the origin of the Franks,<sup>9</sup> providing the notional origin of the community. The author reinforces this and brings in the common territory by using the term *Franci* to apply specifically to the Franks of the

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<sup>4</sup> Reimitz, *Writing for the Future*.

<sup>5</sup> Helmut Reimitz has been leading the way in this interpretation of how Gregory's *Histories* were used by later authors. See H. Reimitz, 'Social Networks and Identities in Frankish Historiography: New Aspects of the Textual History of Gregory of Tours', in R. Corradini, M. Diesenberger and H. Reimitz (eds), *The Construction of Communities: Texts, Resources and Artefacts* (Brill, 2003), pp. 229-268; H. Reimitz, 'The Art of Truth: Historiography and Identity in the Frankish World', in R. Corradini, R. Meens, C. Possel and P. Shaw (eds), *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2006), pp. 87-103; H. Reimitz, 'The Providential Past: Visions of Frankish Identity in the Early Medieval History of Gregory of Tours' *Historiae* (sixth-ninth century)', in W. Pohl, C. Gantner and R. Payne (eds), *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World: The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300-1100* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 109-35; *Writing for the Future*.

<sup>6</sup> Gerberding, *Rise; Late Merovingian France*, pp. 79-87.

<sup>7</sup> The section based on Gregory is *LHF*, 5-35.

<sup>8</sup> *DLH*, i.1.

<sup>9</sup> *LHF*, 1-4.

Neustrian *Teilreich*,<sup>10</sup> while also referring to other sub-groups of Franks with their own geographical locations. The common rulers are, of course, the Merovingians, who share their origin with that of their people. Common religious belief is perhaps more implicit, but there is a strong religious current running through the text. Above all, though, by writing this narrative the author was contributing to his audience's shared memory of the past.

In fact, *LHF* was the last and most extreme output of a historiographical trend that had begun shortly after Gregory's death and which focussed on 'Frankishness' as the most important communal identity in the *regnum Francorum*. The imagined Frankish community is less explicitly the focus of Fredegar's *Chronicle*, but because it represents a compilation of early materials along with an original section relating to more recent events,<sup>11</sup> this text allows us to glimpse how the notion of the Frankish community developed over the first half of the seventh century while simultaneously showing us what an author writing in the middle of the century thought was worth preserving. In other words, we can see how the compiler who wrote c. 660 imagined the Frankish community, but also what materials of earlier authors still had significance. Like the *LHF*-author, Fredegar's narrative contains the notional origin of the community, descriptions of its shared rulers and references to its shared religious beliefs. Also like the *LHF*-author, Fredegar had a sense of the Franks inhabiting the geographical boundaries of the *regnum Francorum*, although unlike the later author he did not see any of the sub-groups as more 'Frankish' than the others. Needless to say, Fredegar was also contributing to his audience's shared memory of the past.

In fact, Fredegar's focus becomes more Frankish as his narrative progresses – notwithstanding his continued attention to events outside the *regnum*. This went hand-in-hand with an increased focus on the *Teilreiche*, and between the accounts of these two authors we can see one of the most negotiable ways of imagining the Frankish community in the late Merovingian period lay in addressing the balance between regional and Frankish identity, as well as the nature of the relationship between the *Teilreiche*, especially Neustria and Austrasia. These trends are found

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<sup>10</sup> Gerberding, *Rise*, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Collins, *Fredegar-Chroniken*, pp. 46-55; H. Reimitz, 'Cultural Brokers of a Common Past: History, Identity and Ethnicity in Merovingian Historiography', in W. Pohl and G. Heydemann (eds), *Strategies of Identification: Ethnicity and Religion in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 257-301.

not only in Fredegar's *Chronicle* and *LHF*, but also in several of the saints' *Lives* that were composed in Francia in the seventh century, and in what follows we shall have cause to turn to these as points of comparison with what we find in the historical narratives.

The debate about the nature of the Frankish community continued into the Carolingian period. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the shift to Carolingian rule altered the way authors wrote about their community. Carolingian authors still saw the origins of the Frankish community in the same way as had the earlier authors, as can be seen in Fredegar's continuator's use of the Trojan origin story.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, the continuator added his account to those of Fredegar and the *LHF*-author, while the *AMP*-author used *LHF* as a model, suggesting some sense of continuity with the Merovingian past. But with the exception of the continuator, those writing under the Carolingians tended to begin their narratives with some important event in the dynasty's history. So the *ARF*-author began his narrative with the death of Charles Martel and the beginning of Pippin III's reign,<sup>13</sup> the *AMP*-author with the ascent of Pippin II and Einhard with the deposition of Childeric III. In the same way as Merovingian authors tied the emergence of their rulers to the origins of the Franks, so Carolingian authors were imagining a community that emerged from the actions of its rulers. This makes sense considering the nature of the Carolingian community, in which the importance of 'Frankishness' was balanced against the desire to create and present a Christian community composed of many peoples. But before we consider the ways in which Carolingian authors re-imagined the Frankish community, let us first consider how their Merovingian predecessors imagined it.

## 1.2 The Frankish Community in the Late Merovingian Period

The late Merovingian period has traditionally been seen as the nadir of the early medieval *regnum Francorum*, a time when the achievements of Clovis I and his sons and grandsons were squandered by powerless *rois fainéants* and bickering nobles who simultaneously lost control of the peripheries around the Frankish heartland and fought continuous civil wars. But this is to take a view too influenced by Carolingian perceptions of late Merovingian history, particularly those found in

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<sup>12</sup> For the continuator's emphasis on continuity with the past, see Goosmann, *Memorable Crises*, pp. 55-6.

<sup>13</sup> For this as a kind of new beginning for the Franks, see Goosmann, *Memorable Crises*, pp. 76-7.

*AMP* and Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne*. These are important texts, to be sure, but as we shall see, they tell us far more about the complex Carolingian attitude to the Merovingians than they do about what was really going on in Francia during the seventh and early eighth centuries. Turning to the sources which were actually written at that time, a rather different picture emerges. Admittedly, it is not difficult to see where the Carolingians got their ideas from: Fredegar's *Chronicle*, *LHF* and various saints' *Lives* are replete with wars in which Franks fought one another under a succession of child-kings. But focussing on these aspects of the narratives means overlooking some important trends in late Merovingian historiography. Authors writing in the seventh and early eighth centuries believed in the existence of a Frankish community; that is, a group of nobles who shared descent from a common ancestry, who shared political and cultural concerns and who had a vested interest in the overall unity of their kingdom despite the existence of separate sub-kingdoms. Moreover, the authors themselves clearly supported the idea the *regnum Francorum* was at its strongest when consensus was maintained, not just between the nobility of one sub-kingdom, but between all the nobles of the *regnum*.<sup>14</sup>

Late Merovingian authors, then, were not writing about a community in a constant state of crisis: the various crises they narrate served as warnings to their audience about what happened when the consensus is broken. Because of this, we can glean from our sources what their authors thought made the Frankish community work. We can see their attitudes towards the *Teilreiche* and their implications for Frankish unity. We can see their attitudes towards the inhabitants of the *Teilreiche* and how Frankish identity was being negotiated during this period. We can also see how they balanced the presentation of regional interests against the desire for Frankish unity. While each author wrote from the perspective of a particular region, they rarely let regional bias prevent them from praising figures who worked for the good of the community. If the Franks were seen as a group with an active role in history in the late Merovingian period, the importance of rulers for steering the community could never be denied. In all these aspects of the narratives we can, of course, see variation both in what authors prioritised and what they thought was most important for the good of the community. But what strikes the

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<sup>14</sup> The 'consensus' model of late Merovingian politics has been developed most fully by Paul Fouracre, Richard Gerberding and Ian Wood. See especially, Gerberding, *Rise*, pp. 146-72; Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 234-8; *Late Merovingian France*; Fouracre, 'Frankish Political Institutions', particularly discussion at pp. 301-15.

reader about these sources is the overall cohesion in what authors chose to write about, and in this they showed their concern for and understanding of the Frankish community. Let us begin this section by examining how two authors traced the origins of that community, before going on to consider how authors wrote about the community in their own times.

### 1.2.1 From Trojans to Franks

While the two narrators of late Merovingian history, Fredegar and the *LHF*-author, both modelled their works on Gregory of Tours's *Histories*, they departed from his narrative and approach in a number of ways. One of the most notable of these is they trace the origins of the Franks and their kings.<sup>15</sup> Gregory had claimed he had not been able to learn anything about the origins of Frankish royal power from his sources, and did not narrate the origin of the Frankish people, other than their emergence from Pannonia.<sup>16</sup> Both Fredegar and the *LHF*-author, however, claimed the Franks were descended from Trojans who had escaped the fall of Troy.<sup>17</sup> While some elements of this story are common to both sources, they ultimately tell two quite different versions of the Frankish *origo gentis*. The important point, though, is by narrating this story both Fredegar and the *LHF*-author clearly show how they imagined the notion of the common origin of those within the Frankish community; each was interested in exploring the origins of this community in order to show continuity between the legendary past and the present. Before turning to the purpose such stories served, though, it is worth recounting what each author says.

Fredegar's Trojan origin story appears first as an interpolation in the *Chronicle* of Eusebius-Jerome.<sup>18</sup> The story later appears in a condensed form as an

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<sup>15</sup> Gerberding, *Rise*, pp. 11-30.

<sup>16</sup> *DLH*, ii.9.

<sup>17</sup> Summaries of this subject have been provided by Barlow, 'Trojan Origins'; I.N. Wood, 'Defining the Franks: Frankish Origins in Early Medieval Historiography', in S. Forde, L. Johnson and A.V. Murray (eds), *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leeds, 1995), pp. 47-57; E. Ewig, 'Trojamythos und fränkische Frühgeschichte', in D. Geuenich (ed.), *Die Franken und die Alemannen bis zur 'Schlacht bei Zülpich' (496-497)*, (Berlin, 1998), pp. 1-30; S. Ghosh, *The Barbarian Past in Early Medieval Historical Narrative* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 2009), pp. 85-101. James, *Franks*, pp. 235-7 represents a rather dismissive view of the origin story. For a different interpretation of the importance and significance of the Trojan origin story, the precise implications of which lie beyond the present study, see N. Birns, 'The Trojan Myth: Postmodern Reverberations', *Exemplaria*, 5 (1993), 45-78.

<sup>18</sup> Fredegar, ii.4-6.

interpolation in Gregory's *Histories*.<sup>19</sup> The king of Troy and leader of the group that flees the city after its fall is Priam, who is succeeded by Friga, after whom this group of Trojans becomes known as Frigians. During Friga's reign the Trojans split for the first time, when some of them answer a call for aid from the Macedonians and afterwards settle in Macedonia, becoming incorporated into the Macedonian people and giving birth to many offspring, including Philip and Alexander the Great.<sup>20</sup> The others, who remain with Friga, wander through Asia and Europe, choose Francio as their king after Friga's death – from whom they became known as Franks – and then settle between the Danube and the Rhine.<sup>21</sup> The Franks are subsequently conquered by Pompey and the Romans, but ally with the Saxons to 'cast off his authority'. After this no other ruler or people was able to conquer the Franks, who in turn were able to subjugate other peoples. Fredegar also reports on two further groups that emerged from Troy. One came from another splitting of the group which became Franks: when they entered Europe, part of them settled on the Danube, choosing Torcoth as their leader, from whom they took the name Turks.<sup>22</sup> The second, described in a separate interpolation, were the Romans or 'Latins',<sup>23</sup> who were part of the same group of Trojans as the Frigians, although Fredegar explains they had left Troy in two groups and established the kingdom of the Latins and the kingdom of the Frigians: he also points out Friga and Aeneas – the first king of the Latins – were brothers. We shall return to the significance of this shortly.

*LHF*'s narrative is somewhat more straight-forward, although it also contains a division of the Trojans into those who follow Aeneas to Italy and those who go to the Danube, settling in Pannonia under the leadership of Priam and Antenor. In the *LHF*-author's account, though, Aeneas is the first king of Troy, a 'tyrant' who provokes conflict with neighbouring peoples and is forced to flee to Italy with his followers. At this time the *principes* Priam and Antenor emerge to take the remains of the Trojan army to settle in Pannonia, on the edge of the Maeotic Marshes, where they built a city called Sicambria.<sup>24</sup> The author also explains the Roman Emperor Valentinian was having difficulty with the 'perverse and most wicked Alans', whom

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<sup>19</sup> Fredegar, iii.2.

<sup>20</sup> Fredegar, ii.4.

<sup>21</sup> Fredegar, ii.5.

<sup>22</sup> Fredegar, ii.6.

<sup>23</sup> Fredegar, ii.8-9.

<sup>24</sup> *LHF*, 1. This may be a reference, like Gregory of Tours having Saint Remigius call Clovis 'proud Sicamber', to a link between the Sicambri and the Franks. See *DLH*, ii.31.



he had defeated but who had fled into the Maeotic Marshes. The emperor thus offers remission of tributary payments for ten years for the people that could drive the Alans from the marshes. The Trojans were able to do so, leading Valentinian to name them ‘Franks’, which supposedly meant fierce ‘in the Attic language’.<sup>25</sup> But after ten years the Franks refuse to resume payment of tributes to the Romans, stating they had achieved against the Alans what the Romans could not, and so they should not have to pay tribute and should be free forever.<sup>26</sup> In retaliation, Valentinian sends an army, which defeats the Franks, causing them to flee to the far end of the Rhine, where they establish their own laws and line of kings, freeing themselves from Roman authority.<sup>27</sup>

These accounts converge somewhat when each comes into conflict with Gregory of Tours’s ignorance (alleged or otherwise) of Frankish origins, although neither author reconciles his account with Gregory’s in the same way. Fredegar has a period following the death of Francio in which the Franks were ruled by *duces* rather than kings.<sup>28</sup> This ends when the Franks chose a king, Theudemir son of Ricimer, who fulfilled two criteria: he was long-haired and from the family of Priam, Friga and Francio. This is only a slight change to Gregory’s account, in order to make Ricimer and Theudemir descendants of Priam. Fredegar makes a further minor alteration; whereas in Gregory’s account the next king, Chlodio, ruled around the same time as Theudemir, in Fredegar’s account Chlodio is Theudemir’s son.<sup>29</sup> This provides a direct link between the fifth-century kings and the Trojan kings, although the link remains in doubt because Fredegar leaves open the question of whether Chlodio’s successor, Merovech, was conceived by Chlodio or by a mysterious sea-monster ‘like the Quinotaur’ that supposedly ‘desired’ the king’s wife.<sup>30</sup> Because Fredegar also says the later kings of the Franks were called ‘Merovingians’ after Merovech, this must be a crucial part of his narrative of the origins of the dynasty, although its precise interpretation has been the subject of some debate. It was traditionally seen as a reference to the supposed ‘sacral’

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<sup>25</sup> *LHF*, 2.

<sup>26</sup> *LHF*, 3.

<sup>27</sup> *LHF*, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Fredegar, ii.6.

<sup>29</sup> Fredegar, iii.9; *DLH*, ii.9. See also Fredegar, iii.5.

<sup>30</sup> Fredegar, iii.9: ‘*Fertur, super litore maris aestatis tempore Chlodeo cum uxore resedens, meridiae uxor ad mare labandum vadens, bistera Neptuni Quinotauri similis eam adpetisset. Cumque in continuo aut a bistera aut a viro fuisset concepta, peperit filium nomen Meroveum, per co regis Francorum post vocantur Merovingii.*’

elements of Merovingian kingship,<sup>31</sup> but more recent interpretations have recast it in a more prosaic light, even as a criticism of the Merovingian dynasty.<sup>32</sup>

The *LHF*-author's reconciliation with Gregory's account, like his origin narrative generally, is somewhat more straightforward. After fleeing to the Rhine, Priam and Antenor's sons, Marchomir and Sunno – called *principes* – take up leadership of the Franks.<sup>33</sup> After Sunno's death, though, the Franks decide they want to be ruled by kings; Marchomir recommends the Franks make his son, Faramund, their 'long-haired' king, and they elevate him 'so they might have one king like other peoples.'<sup>34</sup> Here Faramund – rather than Gregory and Fredegar's Theudemir – is the father of Chlodio, so the Merovingian dynasty is still descended from Priam – perhaps even more firmly here because there is no story hinting at a monstrous parentage for Merovech; rather, he is – as in Gregory's version – 'of Chlodio's family.'<sup>35</sup>

All this legendary material seems rather unusual to a modern audience more familiar with the Trojan War and its aftermath as told by Homer and Virgil, and with what we can learn of early Frankish history from our available sources. But this highlights just how imagined the notion of common origins was for the Franks. Of course, other early medieval peoples had their own *origines gentium*, with the Scandinavian origin seemingly much more popular. 'Scandza' was even referred to as 'the womb of nations' because so many peoples traced their origins to the region.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, writing in the early ninth century, Frechulf of Lisieux recounted a simplified version of the Trojan origin story, but then added some believed the Franks had come from Scandza, 'the womb of nations, from which the Goths and other Germanic peoples

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<sup>31</sup> See R. le Jan, 'Die Sakralität der Merowinger oder: Mehrdeutigkeiten der Geschichtsschreibung', in S. Airlie, W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (eds), *Staat im Frühen Mittelalter* (Wien, 2006), pp. 73-92, at 90-1.

<sup>32</sup> On Fredegar's use of this story to criticise the Merovingian family, see Wood, 'Deconstructing', pp. 149-53.

<sup>33</sup> *LHF*, 1, 4. The names Marchomir and Sunno were known to Gregory, even if not in a Trojan context; *DLH*, ii.9.

<sup>34</sup> *LHF*, 4. The author's phraseology here may be a reference to I Samuel, viii.5. See Dörler, '*Liber Historiae Francorum*', 39-40.

<sup>35</sup> *LHF*, 5.

<sup>36</sup> The phrase is taken from Jordanes, *Getica*, ed. T. Mommsen, *MGH AA*, 5, 1 (Berlin, 1882), 25. The most obvious contemporary example of the Scandinavian origin is that of the Lombards reported in *Origo gentis Langobardorum*, ed. G. Waitz, *MGH SS rer. Lang.* 1 (Hanover, 1878), 1; Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. G. Waitz, *MGH SS rer. Lang.* 1 (Hanover, 1878), i.1-18. Fredegar was aware of this Lombard origin story; see Fredegar, iii.65.

had come'. He may have seen the difference between the Frankish *origo gentis* and those of other peoples as incongruous and even used the commonality of Germanic languages to support the assertion of Scandinavian origin for the Franks.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, he was the only early medieval author to voice such doubts openly.

When the Franks first linked themselves to the Trojans is unknown, since Fredegar is the legend's earliest witness but surely not its inventor. The story's absence from Gregory of Tours's narratives has been debated: Was he aware of the story? If so, why did he not include it? Did he ignore it as nonsense? One particularly plausible theory as to the story's origin sees the Franks as influenced by their interactions with the third- and fourth-century Gallo-Romans, who had their own legends about the Trojan origins of both the Gauls and the Romans,<sup>38</sup> although it may not have been until the end of the sixth century members of the Merovingian dynasty began explicitly using the legend to support their authority.<sup>39</sup> That this was happening around the same time Gregory was writing his *Histories* cannot be overlooked, nor can it be seen as coincidence. A Trojan origin of the Franks had no place in Gregory's explicitly Christian conception of community because it gave them a history outside that of the Gallic Church, and reporting it would have preferenced them over other groups present in Gaul. We should therefore conclude he knew of the legend but chose not to mention it because it did not fit with his conception of history.<sup>40</sup> In other words, he was suppressing the Frankish claim to communal identity just as he configured the Merovingian as *reges Gallicae*, in order to subsume them within his Christian community of Gaul.

In the seventh and eighth centuries, though, and regardless of how long the idea of Frankish origins in Troy had been in circulation or where such stories came from, this became a central part of how the community was imagined. Indeed, it was so important to the *LHF*-author he used it as the opening for his work: there was no history of the Franks without their Trojan origin. While the story appears somewhat more incidental to the overall narrative of the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, the information was clearly worth adding to the accounts the compiler had at his

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<sup>37</sup> Frechulf of Lisieux, *Histories*, ed. M. I. Allen, *Frechulfi Lexoviensis episcopi opera omnia*, CCCM 169A (Turnhout, 2002), I.ii.17. See M. Innes, 'Teutons or Trojans? The Carolingians and the Germanic Past', in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Y. Hen and M. Innes (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 227–49, at p. 233.

<sup>38</sup> The reasons for accepting this theory are most clearly laid out in Barlow, 'Trojan Origins', pp. 88–90. See also Wood, 'Defining the Franks', pp. 51–2.

<sup>39</sup> Barlow, 'Trojan Origins', p. 93. See also Ewig, 'Trojamythos', pp. 23–8.

<sup>40</sup> Barlow, 'Trojan Origins'; Wood, 'Defining the Franks', pp. 49–53; Reimitz, *Writing*.

disposal. But what does this information tell us about the understanding of the Frankish community?

First, it shows the Franks were at least the equals, if not the superiors of the Romans because they had defeated either the Romans themselves or enemies the Romans were incapable of defeating.<sup>41</sup> It also gives the Franks a long and illustrious history that stretched back into Antiquity, like that of the Romans. In fact, while each author only hints at the relationship between the Romans and Franks, they both clearly give the two groups comparable histories, making the imagined Frankish history more like Roman history than the antique histories given to other peoples, such as that given to the Goths by Jordanes.<sup>42</sup> But while they have similar histories, Frankish independence from Rome is also important, especially for Fredegar, who links this with the idea the Franks had subjugated other peoples, perhaps showing them to be a new imperial power. Second, we are provided with something of an etymology for the collective name the Franks used to refer to themselves: it was either taken from one of their legendary kings or applied as a representation of their fierceness,<sup>43</sup> but either way is an important foundational moment for the Franks as a people. Third, we see the moment when the Franks gained royal leadership, even if they had already been ruled by the ancestors of this first king for some time.<sup>44</sup> Neither author explains the significance of the kings being ‘long-haired’, or the reason for choosing to have a king beyond wanting to be like other peoples in the *LHF*-author’s account, but this is crucial for the notion of common rulership: the rulers have their origin in the community.

This point of ‘king-making’ may actually be the most significant aspect in both *origines* because it represents a proto-constitutional link between the Franks and their kings: the Franks choose their king, just as they choose to be ruled by a king. This point seems better developed in *LHF*, where the author also connects this moment with the time the Franks began to have laws (borrowing from the Prologue

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<sup>41</sup> Note, both Gerberding and Dörler play down the importance of the relationship between Franks and Romans in their readings of *LHF*. See Gerberding, *Rise*, p. 18; Dörler, ‘*Liber Historiae Francorum*’, pp. 30-1.

<sup>42</sup> Ghosh, *Barbarian Past*, pp. 97-101. For the history of the Goths, see Jordanes, *Getica*, 4-24.

<sup>43</sup> In his *Etymologies*, Isidore of Seville cites both of these as possible origins for the name of the Franks; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911), IX, ii.101.

<sup>44</sup> It is worth noting the idea of the Trojan origin was still being put to such uses in the late medieval period; see C. Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late Medieval France*, trans. S.R. Huston, ed. F.L. Cheyette (Berkeley, 1991), pp. 226-44.

of *Lex Salica*),<sup>45</sup> and also uses similar language for the accessions of several kings and mayors, especially from the reign of Dagobert I onwards. It is a pivotal moment in both texts, though, because it makes the Franks active in their own history, another sign of how much these authors were invested in the idea of the Frankish community. Let us turn now to how these authors and their contemporaries wrote about the community in their own time and how they, like Gregory, subsumed potentially divisive elements into their imagined Frankish community.

### 1.2.2 The *Teilreiche*

In the different versions of the *origo gentis* narrated by Fredegar and the *LHF*-author we have a story in which the Franks emerge as a unified people, demonstrating clearly the idea there was a coherent *gens Francorum*. But the Frankish *gens* of the late Merovingian period was divided into sub-groups defined by the geographical divisions that had become the standard by the end of the sixth century; the division of the kingdom into three sub-kingdoms, or *Teilreiche*. When examining Fredegar's *Chronicle* in particular we can almost see the points at which the three sub-kingdoms crystallised politically, and at which they came to determine the geographical identities within the *regnum*. In *LHF*, meanwhile, we can see the extreme to which these divisions could be taken in identifying the different groups of Franks. What we have in these two sources, and others written in the period, is a constant ambiguity between an emphasis on regional identity and ethnic identity – that is, between the identification of individuals or groups as inhabitants of the sub-kingdoms or simply as Franks.

Two major divisions of the Frankish kingdom took place in the sixth century; the first between the sons of Clovis I and the second between the sons of his last surviving son Chlothar I in the aftermath of the latter's death in 561. These divisions were not of coterminous territories, but rather saw the scattered areas of the kingdom divided more or less equally between four sons in each case, with each son being assigned a 'capital city' (Reims, Paris, Soissons and Orleans). During the fratricidal rivalries and wars that followed these divisions, the exact territories ruled by each

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<sup>45</sup> Compare *LHF*, 4 to *Pactus legis Salicae*, Prologue.

king were subject to change.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, when one of the four kings sharing in the division died, his ‘kingdom’ could easily be taken by his fellow kings, rather than passed on to his own sons.<sup>47</sup> This, at least, is the situation as it appears in Gregory’s *Histories*. Neither Fredegar nor the *LHF*-author was particularly anachronistic on this point, despite the consolidated existence of the *Teilreiche* in their own days, and each author largely followed their predecessor’s treatment of the sixth-century *regnum*.

By the end of the sixth century, though, the division of the Frankish kingdom had crystallised into three *Teilreiche*: Austrasia, the eastern kingdom, centred on the lower Rhineland; Neustria, the central kingdom, centred on Paris and Soissons and stretching to the Loire; and Burgundy, the southern kingdom, based on what had been the realm of the Burgundians centred on the Rhone valley before its conquest by the sons of Clovis and Clotild in 534. Although not one of the *Teilreiche*, Aquitaine also constituted an important part of the *regnum*, not least when Dagobert I created a sub-kingdom there for his half-brother Charibert II (629-32).<sup>48</sup> This kingdom of Aquitaine ceased to exist after Charibert’s death,<sup>49</sup> and the region’s history is hard to trace for the second half of the seventh century,<sup>50</sup> but we shall return to its significance for the early Carolingians in the following chapter.

In the sources of the late Merovingian period, we can see an implicit acknowledgement the three sub-kingdoms had come into existence with the deaths of Sigibert I, Chilperic I and Guntram, although the crystallisation of the *Teilreiche* was likely a long process that had begun with the death of Charibert I in 567, after which his territories were divided between the three surviving brothers. We see the emergence of the *Teilreiche* in the sources with the accessions of Childebert II (575 in Austrasia; 592 in Burgundy) and Chlothar II (584). In the opening chapter of Book Four of his *Chronicle*, Fredegar simply calls Guntram *rex Francorum* (while specifying he ruled the kingdom of Burgundy),<sup>51</sup> and later speaks of him

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<sup>46</sup> See Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 88-101.

<sup>47</sup> In fact, the kingdom of Reims was the only kingdom to be passed intact from father to son in the sixth century, first from Theuderic I to Theudebert I in 533, then from the latter to his son Theudebald in 555. The kingdom was later passed from Sigibert I to his son Childebert II, then to the latter’s eldest son Theudebert II. Childebert was also able to pass his kingdom of Burgundy to his second son Theuderic II.

<sup>48</sup> Fredegar, iv.57-8. For discussion of Charibert, see Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 148-9.

<sup>49</sup> Fredegar, iv.67.

<sup>50</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 281-6.

<sup>51</sup> Fredegar, iv.1.

‘establishing’ Chlothar ‘in his father’s [Chilperic’s] kingdom.’<sup>52</sup> Later still, Fredegar speaks of Wintrio, *dux* of Champagne, invading ‘the kingdom of Chlothar’ (not Neustria),<sup>53</sup> while in the following chapters he refers to ‘the second year after Childebert’s accession in Burgundy’ and ‘the third year of Childebert’s reign in Burgundy’,<sup>54</sup> and also of Childebert’s death, after which ‘Theudebert chose Austrasia, having the seat at Metz, while Theuderic accepted the kingdom of Guntram in Burgundy having the seat at Orleans.’<sup>55</sup> In his narration of Frankish matters, Fredegar focussed primarily on Burgundy and Austrasia, but he also sought to emphasise Chlothar’s role as ruler of the re-united *regnum*. As such, it is perhaps not surprising the first mention of Neustria does not come until much later in the narrative, specifically in the section relating to Chlothar II’s conquest of the whole kingdom, at which time he sends Theuderic II’s son Merovech – his own godson – to Neustria to spare his life.<sup>56</sup> In *LHF*, consistent references to Austrasia begin when the *dux* Gundald takes Childebert II there to make him king, and Childebert is later referred to as king of both Austrasia and Burgundy; because of the author’s understanding and usage of the term *Franci*, there are no references to Neustria or Neustrians.

Because this division of the *regnum* persisted down to the end of the Merovingian period, it necessarily dominated the way in which our authors wrote about Frankish history, and we encounter the inhabitants of the *Teilreiche* – Austrasians, Neustrians and Burgundians – as often as we do Franks. Yet it remains clear each of these groups was in some way ‘Frankish’, although the status of the Burgundians is less clear. In other words, the term Austrasian, for example, was a way of referring to a Frank from the kingdom of Austrasia. These were specifically geographical distinctions for members of the *gens Francorum* and they remained regional identities; there never developed any concept of ethnic Austrasians or Neustrians, while the Burgundian ethnicity that had only ever been weakly developed in the pre-Merovingian period seems to have fallen out of use.<sup>57</sup> Such regional distinctions, then, were never seen as barriers to an overarching ideal of

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<sup>52</sup> Fredegar, iv.3: ‘*et eum [Chlothar]... in regnum patris firmauit.*’

<sup>53</sup> Fredegar, iv.14.

<sup>54</sup> Fredegar, iv.15.

<sup>55</sup> Fredegar, iv.16: ‘*Teudebertus sortitus est Auster sedem habens Mittensem, Teudericus accipit regnum Guntramni in Burgundia sedem habens Aurilianes.*’ The capital of the eastern kingdom had been moved to Metz during the reign of Sigibert I as a result of Avar incursions.

<sup>56</sup> Fredegar, iv.42.

<sup>57</sup> See Stegeman, *Austrasian Identity*, pp. 12-13.

Frankish unity or a desire for such unity on the part of the authors who used these distinctions: the concept of the united Frankish community remained central in this period, even when the *regnum* was divided between different kings. These were not terms of otherness or exclusion, nor do they carry any judgemental connotations, even if the *LHF*-author only considered the Neustrians the ‘true’ Franks or Fredegar thought the Neustrians the cause of Dagobert I’s supposed descent into decadence. But what did the existence of the *Teilreiche* mean for the cohesion of the Frankish community? And how did late Merovingian authors understand and negotiate the relationship between Frankish and regional identity?

In attempting to answer these questions we must consider the way the authors balance regional identity with ethnic (that is, Frankish) identity. The issue is actually reasonably straight-forward in Fredegar’s *Chronicle*; whatever the author’s own regional preferences or focus, he seems to have perceived all the Frankish sub-groups as equally Frankish and as equal members of the Frankish community. We can see this most clearly in the political process he calls the *iudicium Francorum*.<sup>58</sup> The *iudicium* appears as a process by which the Franks as a collective body could end disputes that threatened to destabilise their kingdom. The first reference to the *iudicium* comes in a dispute between the brothers Theudebert II and Theuderic II over Alsace, held by Theuderic but raided by Theudebert: ‘From this, the two kings, agreeing with one another, instituted that the boundaries would be agreed by the judgement of the Franks at the fort of Seltz.’<sup>59</sup> The result was Theuderic’s secession of Alsace, along with Saintois, Thurgau and Champagne to his brother, although it is unclear from Fredegar’s account exactly how this result was arrived at.

The second reference to the *iudicium* comes in the aftermath of Theuderic’s death, when his grandmother Brunhild was attempting to rally the Austrasians and Burgundians to support Theuderic’s son Sigibert as their king. Chlothar II had invaded Austrasia, which Brunhild demanded he leave: ‘Chlothar answered and sent to Brunhild through his envoy that he promised to fulfil whatever judgment would be made between them by the Franks with God’s help in the judgement of the

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<sup>58</sup> I am grateful to Helmut Reimitz for bringing the *iudicium* to my attention. For his thoughts on this process, see Reimitz, *Writing for the Future*.

<sup>59</sup> Fredegar, iv.37: ‘Vnde placetis inter his duos regis ut Francorum iudicio finiretur, Saloissa castro instituunt.’



chosen Franks.<sup>60</sup> There is actually no evidence this *iudicium* was held – indeed, it seems unlikely given the course of the narrative. But Fredegar clearly believed it could have resolved the conflict.

A final hint of the *iudicium* comes from the occasionally turbulent joint-reign of Chlothar and his son Dagobert. The latter had been made king of Austrasia, but had not been granted all the territories traditionally belonging to the sub-kingdom, which he demanded from his father, but the latter refused: ‘With twelve Franks chosen by these two kings, they would mark out the boundaries of their dispute.’<sup>61</sup> Bishop Arnulf of Metz was one of the chosen twelve, and with his guidance the Franks were able to reconcile father and son, granting Dagobert all the Austrasian lands except those south of the Loire and in Provence. Although the phraseology here is slightly different than the preceding references to the *iudicium*, and does not use the term, it seems clear from the context this is precisely the sort of thing the *iudicium Francorum* involved. The existence of this process and Fredegar’s belief in its efficacy shows his commitment to the idea of consensus between the three *Teilreiche* and the way he imagined the Frankish community as composed of these groups which worked together.

The nature and status of the sub-groups is more opaque in *LHF* because the author refers to the Neustrians as *Franci*. At first glance, this suggests he imagined the Neustrians to be the ‘true Franks’, or perhaps even the sole members of the Frankish community. Yet he still saw the Austrasians and Burgundians as types of Franks. The Austrasians are called *Franci superiores*,<sup>62</sup> a term which seems to be based in Roman geographical terminology and emphasises the regional nature of such identities, and Austrasia is referred to as a ‘Frankish kingdom’.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile, in the aftermath of Chlothar II’s victory in 613, we learn the ‘Burgundians and Austrasians made peace with the rest of the Franks’,<sup>64</sup> a statement which carries the implication of perceived Frankishness for the groups involved. The author also refers to a further sub-group of the Austrasians – the Ripuarians – who were the

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<sup>60</sup> Fredegar, iv.40: ‘*Chlotharius respondebat et per suos legatus Brunehilde mandabat, iudicio Francorum electorum quicquid precedente Domino a Francis inter eosdem iudicabatur, pollicetur esset implere.*’

<sup>61</sup> Fredegar, iv.53: ‘*Elictis ab duobus regibus duodecim Francis ut eorum disceptatione haec finirent intentionem.*’

<sup>62</sup> *LHF*, 36, 41.

<sup>63</sup> *LHF*, 27.

<sup>64</sup> *LHF*, 40: ‘*Burgundiones et Austrasii, cum reliquis Francis pace facta.*’

inhabitants of the area around Cologne,<sup>65</sup> implying the Austrasians actively saw themselves and were seen by others as a ‘federation’ of Frankish groups.<sup>66</sup> This suggests the *LHF*-author, while believing the Neustrians to be the true Franks, acknowledged the existence of other groups of Franks who were geographically – not ethnically – distinct but still had some claim to being part of the *gens Francorum*. By labelling these groups *Franci*, the author imagined them part of the same community, even if they had to be distinguished from the true Franks (the Neustrians) because of the geographic barriers that separated them.

### 1.2.3 The Burgundians

Unlike the Neustrians and Austrasians, who appear explicitly as Franks in our sources, the Burgundians are more ambiguous, and represent an interesting case study for the distinction between geographical and ethnic identities.<sup>67</sup> The Burgundian kingdom of the seventh century was based on the realm that had emerged from the settlement of the Burgundians in southern Gaul in the fifth century and which had been brought to an end by the sons of Clovis I and Clothild in 534.<sup>68</sup> Initially, the Burgundian territories were simply added to those already being divided between the Frankish kings, and, due to their geographical location, were particularly associated with Orleans. By the end of the sixth century a Frankish kingdom of Burgundy existed and it continued to exist throughout the Merovingian period, but had no king of its own after the death of Sigibert II in 613. Instead, it was ruled by the kings of Neustria, although mayors of the palace of Burgundy were still appointed intermittently up to the middle of the seventh century. From a seventh- or early eighth-century perspective, then, there were two Burgundian groups, both of which feature in the accounts of our sources: the first the original, ‘ethnic’ Burgundians;<sup>69</sup> the second the inhabitants of the Frankish kingdom of Burgundy.

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<sup>65</sup> *LHF*, 38; Gerberding, *Rise*, p. 76.

<sup>66</sup> Stegeman, *Austrasian Identity*, p. 205.

<sup>67</sup> I am grateful to Roger Collins for encouraging me to pursue this line of enquiry.

<sup>68</sup> *DLH*, iii.5-6, iii.11. See Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 51-4.

<sup>69</sup> On the ambiguity of ethnicity in the original Burgundian realm, see I.N. Wood, ‘Ethnicity and the Ethnogenesis of the Burgundians’, with an appendix on ‘The Settlement of the Burgundians’, in H. Wolfram and W. Pohl (eds), *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern* (Vienna, 1990), pp. 53-69; P. Amory, ‘The meaning and purpose of ethnic terminology in the Burgundian laws’, *Early Medieval Europe*, 2 (1993), 1-28; P. Amory, ‘Names, ethnic identity, and community in fifth- and sixth-century Burgundy’, *Viator*, 25 (1994), 1-30.

It is not always clear, though, what distinction our authors saw between these two groups. In the Third Book of his *Chronicle* – that is, in those sections which relate to the original Burgundian realm – Fredegar retains Gregory of Tours’s usage of the term *Burgundiones*, which can be translated straightforwardly as ‘Burgundians’. Yet this term is not used in the Fourth Book, with the exception of a single *Burgundio*, to whom we shall return. Instead we hear of *Burgundia*,<sup>70</sup> the *regnum Burgundiae*,<sup>71</sup> the *proceres, leudes, duces et primates Burgundiae*<sup>72</sup> and a group referred to as *Burgundae farones*, which is usually – though perhaps erroneously – translated simply as ‘Burgundians’.<sup>73</sup> This unusual term has been seen by modern scholars as a specific, collective term for the nobles of the Frankish kingdom of Burgundy,<sup>74</sup> but whether these men would have self-identified as Franks or Burgundians is impossible to say.<sup>75</sup> The only other instance of a name which could in any way be linked to the *Burgundae farones* in the seventh century does not come from Burgundy and is not mentioned by Fredegar. The Faronid family produced two members who became saints, Faro – bishop of Meaux – and Fara – abbess of Faremoutiers.<sup>76</sup> These two are also known as Burgundofaro and Burgundofara respectively, but the family – at least so far as it is attested – held land in Neustria, and so it seems unlikely their alternative names were in any way associated with the *regnum Burgundiae*, whether in the past or contemporaneously, although their descent from a Burgundian family cannot be wholly ruled out.<sup>77</sup>

Only three individuals are described by Fredegar in a way we might interpret as him presenting them as Burgundians. The first is the most enigmatic and difficult to interpret. In the year Chlothar II had become sole king of the Franks (613),

<sup>70</sup> Fredegar, iv.15-16, iv.38, iv.40, iv.42-3, iv.47, iv.55-8, iv.74, iv.76, iv.78-9, iv.89.

<sup>71</sup> Fredegar, iv.1, iv.27, iv.42, iv.54, iv.56, iv.73, iv.78, iv.80, iv.89.

<sup>72</sup> Fredegar, iv.42, iv.44, iv.54, iv.56, iv.58, iv.89-90.

<sup>73</sup> Fredegar, iv.41, iv.44, iv.55. See Wallace-Hadrill, *Chronicle of Fredegar*, pp. 34 with n. 1, 36-7, 46.

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, G. Halsall, ‘Social Identities and Social Relationships in Early Merovingian Gaul’, in I. Wood (ed.), *Franks and Alamanni: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 141-75 at p. 151.

<sup>75</sup> A.C. Murray, *Germanic Kinship Structure: Studies in Law and Society in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1983), p. 93 defines the term as referring to ‘the Burgundian *leudes* of the Frankish king’, which does not clarify matters in this context.

<sup>76</sup> On whom see R. le Jan, ‘Convents, Violence, and Competition for Power in Seventh-Century Francia’, in M. de Jong, F. Theuvs and C. van Rhijn, *Topographies of Power* (Brill, 2001), pp. 243-69 at pp. 250-5. Burgundofara is mentioned in Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 4 (Hanover and Leipzig, 1902), i.26, ii.21.

<sup>77</sup> See the discussion in W. Aubrichs, ‘Germanic and Gothic Kinship Terminology’, in S.J. Barnish and F. Marazzi (eds), *The Ostrogoths From the Migration Period to the Sixth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 143-82 at pp. 180-1.

Fredegar relates a plot hatched by Bishop Leudemund of Sion and the patrician Alethius to marry Alethius to Chlothar's wife Berthetrude, which would allow the patrician to become king.<sup>78</sup> As well as Chlothar's death, which was predicted to come within the year, the plot also relied on either Alethius or Berthetrude being *regio genere de Burgundionibus*. Unfortunately, Fredegar's Latin in this passage obfuscates his precise meaning, so it is not clear which of the pair was 'of royal Burgundian descent', which of them had a supposed claim to the throne or what such a claim meant (or was thought to mean) in terms of the Merovingian kingdom.<sup>79</sup> The second 'Burgundian', Willibad, is referred to fairly unambiguously as *patricius genere Burgundionum*: a 'patrician of Burgundian descent.'<sup>80</sup> He and either Alethius or Berthetrude, then, were seen as descended from Burgundians, although this does not necessarily mean they were Burgundians themselves. The third individual is Manaulf, described as *Burgundio*; in other words 'a Burgundian', the only figure to be described straightforwardly as such in Book Four of the *Chronicle*. We encounter Manaulf in the midst of a dispute that overtook Burgundy in the 640s, and to which we shall return. He is an ally of Willibad, and after the latter's death attacks one of those responsible, Berthar, who is described as *Francus de pago Vltraiorano*: 'a Frank from the region of Transjura'.<sup>81</sup> Given Transjura was part of the Burgundian *Teilreich*, this distinction between a *Burgundio* and a *Francus* may have had a political resonance.

What we can probably see in Fredegar's accounts of these events, though, are the last traces of the process by which the Franks had integrated themselves into the political sphere of Burgundy. In the middle of the century there were still those who identified as Burgundians or stressed their descent from Burgundian families, but Fredegar's reticence to use the collective term *Burgundiones* suggests the distinction between Burgundian and Frank was losing its former importance. Certainly Fredegar himself, who was probably a native of Burgundy, seems to have no particular preference for the Burgundians over the Neustrians, and both Willibad and his Franco-Neustrian rival Flaochad are criticised for their actions. Fredegar may have been aware Burgundian 'ethnic' identity had lost much of its importance in the aftermath of the Frankish takeover, while Burgundian political allegiance,

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<sup>78</sup> Fredegar, iv.44.

<sup>79</sup> On this episode, see Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 144-5.

<sup>80</sup> Fredegar, iv.78.

<sup>81</sup> Fredegar, iv.90.

which could be claimed by both natives of the region and Frankish incomers, carried great weight. In this case, there may have been a conscious effort on the part of the new nobility to identify themselves as a new kind of Burgundians, hence the coining of the term *Burgundiaefarones*, even if certain individuals still saw a purpose in stressing their descent from the original *Burgundiones*. In this context, it is also worth noting the author of *Passio Leudegari*, like Fredegar another inhabitant of Burgundy, mentions Burgundy, along with its bishops and nobles, but never explicitly refers to the latter as Burgundians,<sup>82</sup> despite the text being primarily set in the region.<sup>83</sup>

The view from the Neustrian texts is more straightforward, although not necessarily easier to interpret. Like Fredegar, the *LHF*-author followed Gregory of Tours in referring to the inhabitants of the original Burgundian realm as *Burgundiones*, but unlike Fredegar he continued to refer to *Burgundiones* in later sections of his narrative. *Burgundiones* also appear briefly in *Vita Balthildis*, where they are ‘united as one with the [Neustrian] Franks’ under the rule of Chlothar III.<sup>84</sup> We must wonder, therefore, how far these authors distinguished between the inhabitants of the original Burgundian realm and the inhabitants of the Frankish kingdom of Burgundy. The author of *Vita Balthildis* only makes this one reference to the Burgundians, although the idea of them being ‘united as one’ with the Neustrians is intriguing. But we can focus on what the *LHF*-author has to say.

The first this author has to say about Burgundy and the Burgundians independently of Gregory of Tours comes in a reference to Childebert II as king of Austrasia and Burgundy.<sup>85</sup> This is roughly sixty years after the conquest of Burgundy by Clovis’s sons, and the author passes over Guntram’s long reign in the *Teilreich* almost in silence.<sup>86</sup> The Burgundians have a central role in the ensuing wars that led to the re-unification of the *regnum* under Chlothar II,<sup>87</sup> but the last reference to *Burgundiones* comes with Chlothar’s invasion of the region, when the

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<sup>82</sup> *Passio Leudegari*, 4, 6, 21.

<sup>83</sup> See *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 194-6.

<sup>84</sup> *Vita Balthildis*, 5: ‘*Burgundiones vero et Franci facti sunt uniti.*’

<sup>85</sup> *LHF*, 36.

<sup>86</sup> Only Guntram’s accession, death and length of reign are mentioned; *LHF*, 29, 35.

<sup>87</sup> *LHF*, 36-40.

‘army of the Franks and Burgundians joined into one’.<sup>88</sup> This seems a purely military affair, but it may be the author’s acknowledgement of the political union between Neustria and Burgundy, which would last until the end of Merovingian rule. Burgundy remained a separate geographical region, but families from the two *Teilreich* increasingly held lands in both, and it would be a Neustro-Burgundian kin-group that would provide the core of leadership for resistance to the Pippinids in the late-seventh and early-eighth centuries.<sup>89</sup> It might just be, then, that by 727, when the *LHF*-author wrote, there was not much distinction between Neustrians and Burgundians, at least for political purposes; they were ruled by the same kings and mayors, were members of the same extended kin-groups and shared the same political concerns and struggles. If this is true, the author saw no need to distinguish between the two groups in his narrative, except for occasionally mentioning if an individual was from Burgundy; his *Franci* – at least for this section of the text – would therefore not be just the Neustrians, as is often assumed, but a larger group comprised of the inhabitants of Neustria and Burgundy.

By the end of the seventh century, the Burgundians – in the sense of the inhabitants of the Frankish kingdom of Burgundy – were clearly considered part of the Frankish community, and so were probably considered ‘Franks’. But the term *Burgundiones* may well still have carried connotations of relating to the Burgundians of the fifth and early-sixth centuries. In this sense it was an ambivalent term of primarily historical significance. Certainly, neither Fredegar nor the *LHF*-author saw the need to alter Gregory of Tours’s usage. The *LHF*-author and the author of *Vita Balthildis* could also use the term for more recent history – in the case of the latter even up to the accession of Chlothar III in 657. But both authors show their audience a point in time when the Burgundians were united with the Franks, thus negating the need for a separate term for the inhabitants of the region. It is difficult to be conclusive on the last point, but we can at least say Fredegar, the *LHF*-author and the author of *Passio Leudegarii* did not apply the term to their contemporary Burgundians, which certainly suggests a process took place across the seventh century which made the term *Burgundiones* obsolete.

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<sup>88</sup> *LHF*, 40: ‘*Tunc coadunato exercitu Francorum et Burgundionum in unum.*’ Burgundy is twice referred to during the chapter which narrates the events surrounding Ebroin and Leudegar; *LHF*, 45.

<sup>89</sup> P.J. Geary, *Aristocracy in Provence: the Rhône Basin at the Dawn of the Carolingian Age* (Stuttgart, 1985), pp. 126-48.

### 1.2.4 Regional conflict and Frankish unity

To write Frankish history in the late Merovingian period was, in many ways, to write about the relations between the *Teilreiche*, and these relations were often turbulent. Generally speaking, though, the authors who did this writing believed in the ideal of Frankish unity and consensus. So how did they balance this with the turbulent inter-regional politics about which they wrote? Very few of the conflicts narrated by our authors remained confined to one *Teilreich*, so in a sense it would be fair to say regional politics and the politics of the whole *regnum* were – to an extent – interchangeable. Such conflicts, then, show us how authors imagined a unified Frankish community despite, or perhaps because of regional conflicts, which were above all negotiations about the political structure of the community. We can see this most clearly in three conflicts narrated by the *LHF*-author, which took place in the period between the accessions of Clovis II in 639 and Theuderic IV in 721. We shall begin with these conflicts before turning to a Burgundian conflict narrated by Fredegar and his treatment of Neustrian-Austrasian relations during the 620s and 630s.

The first of *LHF*'s conflicts took place in the aftermath of the death of the Austrasian King Sigibert III, Clovis II's half-brother, when the mayor of the palace, Grimoald, exiled Sigibert's son Dagobert to Ireland and 'set up his son in the royal power'.<sup>90</sup> The author does not name this son of Grimoald, but he is known from other sources as Childebert 'the Adopted'. According to the *LHF*-author, the Franks (that is, the Neustrians) were 'very indignant about this... and seizing [Grimoald], they brought him to Clovis, king of the Franks, to be condemned'; he was then accused of plotting against his lord and tortured to death.<sup>91</sup> Exactly what happened, when it happened and who Childebert was have been the subjects of much debate,<sup>92</sup> and now even the old assumption Childebert was Grimoald's son cannot be taken

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<sup>90</sup> *LHF*, 43: '*Grimoaldus filium eius parvolum nomine Daygobertum totundit... filium suum in regno constituens.*'

<sup>91</sup> *LHF*, 43: '*Franci itaque hoc valde indignantes... eumque exementes, ad condempnandum rege Francorum Chlodoveo deferent... ut erat morte dignus, quod in domino suo exercuit, ipsius mors valido cruciate finivit.*'

<sup>92</sup> The first significant revision of the traditional view came from L. Dupraz, *Contribution à l'histoire du Regnum Francorum: pendant le troisième quart du VIIe siècle (656-680)* (Fribourg en Suisse, 1948). For more recent assessments, see Gerberding, *Rise*, pp. 47-66; J.-M. Picard, 'Church and Politics in the Seventh Century: The Irish exile of King Dagobert II', in J.-M. Picard (ed.), *Ireland and Northern France* (Dublin, 1991), pp. 27-52.

for granted; he may, despite what the *LHF*-author says, have been Sigibert's son, who had been adopted by Grimoald.<sup>93</sup> In any case, what we can be reasonably sure about is this began as an Austrasian succession crisis, the result of which the Neustrians opposed to such an extent they were willing to go to war to remove Grimoald from power. They may even have been moved to this intervention by Sigibert's widow Chimnechild.<sup>94</sup> The *LHF*-author does not, however, report the fate of Childebert: all we know of the aftermath is Childebert the Adopted was dead by 662, when Childeric II – second son of Clovis II and brother of the ruling Neustrian King Chlothar III – was made king of Austrasia.

The second of *LHF*'s conflicts, for information on which we can also turn to the Burgundian *Passio Leudegarii*, again took place in the aftermath of a king's death: this time Chlothar III, who died in 673. Chlothar left behind two brothers: Childeric II, already ruling as king of Austrasia, and Theuderic. According to *LHF*, the Neustrians now raised Theuderic as their new king, but later – for unstated reasons – rose up against Theuderic and the mayor of the palace, Ebroin, deposing the former and placing the latter in monastic exile.<sup>95</sup> According to *Passio Leudegarii*, though, it was Ebroin alone who raised Theuderic, without calling together the nobles of the kingdom as was traditional. Ebroin then refused to allow the nobles to even come into Theuderic's presence, which caused the uprising and deposition.<sup>96</sup> The Neustrians then took the unprecedented step of inviting Childeric II to be their king. Once again, therefore, what had been a succession crisis for one *Teilreich* came to involve both.

Childeric's rule over the united *regnum* proved to be disastrous, perhaps not least because he brought his Austrasian supporters – including the mayor of the palace Wulfoald – to the Neustrian court with him. The *LHF*-author calls him 'too fickle' and 'incautious', stating 'the greatest hatred and scandal arose among them' because Childeric was 'greatly oppressing the Franks'.<sup>97</sup> *Passio Leudegarii* tells us a

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<sup>93</sup> M. Becher, 'Der Sogenannte Saatsstreich Grimoalds: Versuch einer Neubewertung', in J. Jarnut, U. Nonn und M. Richter (eds), *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit* (Sigmaringen, 1994), pp. 119-147; I.N. Wood, 'Usurpers and Merovingian Kingship', in M. Becher and J. Jarnut (eds), *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751: Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung* (Münster, 2004), pp. 15-31, at pp. 15-16.

<sup>94</sup> Becher, 'Die Sogenannte Staatsreich', pp. 137-42.

<sup>95</sup> *LHF*, 45.

<sup>96</sup> *Passio Leudegarii*, 5.

<sup>97</sup> *LHF*, 45: 'Erat enim ipse Childericus levis nimis, omnia nimis incaute peragebat, donec inter eos odium maximum et scandalum crevit, Francos valde oppremens.'



specific problem the Neustrians had with Childeric was he agreed to their request to revise the laws of the three *Teilreiche*, but then almost immediately overturned this revision because he was ‘misled by the advice of foolish and almost pagan men’ and ‘overcome by youthful fickleness’.<sup>98</sup> Eventually a Neustrian, whom *LHF* names as Bodilo, instigated an uprising against Childeric, which saw the king and his pregnant queen murdered, while Wulfoald fled back to Austrasia. The Neustrians then returned Theuderic to the throne, while Ebroin escaped his monastic imprisonment and – according to *Passio Leudegarii* but not *LHF* – raised his own king, Clovis, a supposed son of Chlothar III, in Austrasia.<sup>99</sup>

Although Ebroin later abandoned this king when he gained the opportunity to once again become mayor of the palace in Neustria,<sup>100</sup> the Austrasians continued the war, now led by the *duces* Martin and Pippin II,<sup>101</sup> and in all probability Sigibert III’s son Dagobert II, whom they had brought back from his Irish exile, although neither *Passio Leudegarii* nor *LHF* mentions him.<sup>102</sup> While the Neustrians were initially victorious – not least because of Ebroin’s treacherous behaviour towards Martin – they eventually turned on Ebroin again, this time killing him, but due to mayoral instability the war dragged on, and eventually Pippin II triumphed and installed his supporters in Neustria.<sup>103</sup> It is important not to overstate the significance of this triumph for the ‘rise’ of the Carolingians,<sup>104</sup> but it certainly brought to an end a series of wars that had dragged on for over a decade.

The third of *LHF*’s crises was triggered by a series of high-profile deaths in quick succession. First Pippin II’s son, Grimoald II, mayor of the palace in Neustria, died in 714 and his son Theudoald was set up in his place.<sup>105</sup> Then Pippin himself died later in the same year and at this point civil war broke out, ‘instigated by the Devil’ as the *LHF*-author has it.<sup>106</sup> The Franks put Theudoald to flight and raised one of their own, Ragamfred, as the new mayor, then raided into Austrasia. Because

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<sup>98</sup> *Passio Leudegarii*, 7: ‘*Ut vero illi libenter petita concessisset, stultorum et pene gentilium depravatus consilio, ut erat iuvenile levitate praeventus, subito quod per sapientium consilia confirmaverat refragavit.*’

<sup>99</sup> *Passio Leudegarii*, 19.

<sup>100</sup> *Passio Leudegarii*, 28.

<sup>101</sup> *LHF*, 46.

<sup>102</sup> The contemporary evidence for his existence comes from Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi I Episcopi Eboracensis auctore Stephano*, ed. W. Levison, *MGH SRM*, 6 (Hanover, 1913), 28. On Dagobert, see Picard, ‘Church and Politics’; Fouracre, ‘Dagobert II’.

<sup>103</sup> *LHF*, 46-7.

<sup>104</sup> Gerberding, *Rise*; Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms; Late Merovingian France*.

<sup>105</sup> *LHF*, 50.

<sup>106</sup> *LHF*, 51.

Grimoald and Theudoald were of an Austrasian family, this crisis involved both kingdoms from the outset. But it is interesting to note the *LHF*-author's language here, because even though Austrasians must have been involved in the initial conflict, he says 'Franks again attacked Franks', and makes no mention of the involvement of any Austrasians.<sup>107</sup>

The following year, shortly after the outbreak of this civil war, Dagobert III also died, and the Neustrians, rather than raising his son Theuderic as their king, instead raised a certain cleric named Daniel, who took the royal name Chilperic.<sup>108</sup> We shall return to the full significance of this decision shortly, but for now it will suffice to say Chilperic seems to have performed well as a war leader, which is presumably why the Neustrians favoured him over the child Theuderic. The Neustrians, with their Frisian allies, pressed the war against the Austrasians, now led by Pippin II's son Charles Martel, who was also fighting a war to establish his position in Austrasia.<sup>109</sup> Ultimately, though, Charles was victorious against all his enemies, and established himself not just in Austrasia but in Neustria too, thus bringing an end to this final crisis – although as we shall see, for the *LHF*-author the actual end of the crisis was marked by the accession of Theuderic IV, at which point the status-quo was fully restored.

At the most basic level, all three of these crises appear to be conflicts based on inter-regional politics: of Austrasia against Neustria. This may, at least partly, have been the case, but strictly speaking this is not how the *LHF*-author presents them. Rather than being conflicts between the two *Teilreiche*, these were conflicts about the Frankish community and the relationship between the different groups within it, especially with regard to royal power and access to it. All three conflicts are triggered by a succession crisis in one *Teilreich* which, for one reason or another, draws in the nobility of the other *Teilreich*.

Whatever the reality of the events surrounding Grimoald I's so-called coup in Austrasia and the establishment of Childebert the Adopted as king, the (Neustrian) author of *LHF* clearly thought the subsequent conflict with the Neustrians was about the incorrect behaviour of a noble towards his king. The author believed Grimoald had acted outside the correct mores of society when he

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<sup>107</sup> *LHF*, 51: 'Franci denuo... Francos invicem inruunt.'

<sup>108</sup> *LHF*, 52.

<sup>109</sup> *LHF*, 53.

exiled Sigibert III's son Dagobert – the rightful heir – and placed ‘his own son’ on the throne. In this case, the Neustrians and their king were within their rights to intervene in Austrasia to restore order. The second conflict, about which we have more detail, confirms royal authority in the *regnum Francorum* was not limited by geography. There was, of course, a precedent for this going right back to the wars of Clovis I's sons. The Neustrians, then, could invite the king of Austrasia to also be their king if necessary. Conversely, when Ebroin was excluded from Theuderic III's return to royal power, he was able to insert himself and his King Clovis into Austrasia, offering the Austrasians access to their own king again. Likewise, a key part of Charles Martel's ascent to power was the raising of a short-lived Austrasian king, Chlothar IV, to provide him with an air of legitimacy, as well as a figure of royal authority for the Austrasians to rally around. Indeed, the sequence of events that led from the aftermath of the crisis of the 670s (including the return and death of Dagobert II) through Pippin II's political ascent to the crisis of the 710s can be seen as the working out of a new political order in which an Austrasian king was no longer necessary, but in which the Austrasian nobles would still have access to the royal court.<sup>110</sup>

In order to further understand the political processes we see in *LHF*, we can turn to earlier conflicts narrated by Fredegar. Despite representing focal points of unity for the entire *regnum*, Chlothar II and Dagobert I both raised separate kings in Austrasia. We should see access to an Austrasian king as a key part of the way in which the nobles of that *Teilreich* understood their politics, not least because it lent an air of legitimacy to their wars against the peripheral peoples.<sup>111</sup> The Austrasians retained their own kings down to the end of the 670s (with a very brief resurgence in the 710s), whereas the Burgundians never again had their own king after Chlothar II's annexation of their kingdom in 613. The nobles of Burgundy, therefore, worked out their relationship with the central Neustrian royal court much earlier than the Austrasians, although the two processes may have been similar. By all available accounts, the Burgundians seem to have integrated themselves rather easily into the political structures centred on the Neustrian court after 613 and, as we have seen, by the beginning of the eighth century there was probably little to distinguish between

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<sup>110</sup> Stegeman, *Austrasian Identity*, pp. 81-2.

<sup>111</sup> Stegeman, *Austrasian Identity*, pp. 71-2.

Neustrians and Burgundians, although their regions remained somewhat distinct. After the death of Warnachar in 626, the Burgundians had even decided to stop having their own mayors: the Burgundian nobility, unlike their Austrasian counterparts, wanted to be part of the Neustrian political order. As we can see from the last Burgundian chapters of Fredegar's *Chronicle*, though, this was not an entirely smooth process.

In 642, there was a brief attempt to restore the mayoralty in Burgundy, when Clovis II's mother and queen-regent Nantechild persuaded the nobility of the *Teilreich* to accept her appointment of Flaochad – a Frank – as mayor.<sup>112</sup> According to Fredegar, this was part of a plan between Nantechild and Flaochad which, because it was 'not according to the will of God' did not come to pass.<sup>113</sup> This is all Fredegar says about the plan, but it immediately sets Flaochad up as a suspicious character, and, despite his promise to protect the interests of the *duces* and bishops of the kingdom, we also learn he planned to kill the patrician Willibad because of 'an earlier hostility'.<sup>114</sup> We are clearly not supposed to side with Willebad either. According to Fredegar, 'he had become rich by seizing the possessions of others... [and] was puffed up against Flaochad and tried to belittle him.'<sup>115</sup> This rivalry led to the conflict which resulted in Willibad's death and the confrontation between the Burgundian Manaulf and the Frank Berthar we have already mentioned, which were shortly followed by Flaochad's death.

Fredegar even points out many believed both Willibad and Flaochad had been killed by God's judgement because of their many crimes. He also identifies two of the men on each side as Franks and Burgundians respectively, suggesting identity may have had a part to play in the rivalry. We should be wary, however, of seeing Willibad's actions as a kind of Burgundian independence movement: Fredegar makes it quite clear the rivalry was based above all on mutual and personal dislike and factionalism.<sup>116</sup> After all, at least one of the Franks involved in the

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<sup>112</sup> Fredegar, iv.89.

<sup>113</sup> Fredegar, iv.89: '*nam alium consilium secreta Flaochatus et Nantildis regina macenauant, quem credetur non fuisse Deo placebelem ideoque non mancepauit effectum.*'

<sup>114</sup> Fredegar, iv.89: '*priorem inimiciam qua cordis arcana dio celauerat memorans, Villebadum patricium interfecere disponebat.*'

<sup>115</sup> Fredegar, iv.90: '*Willebadus cum esset opebus habundans et pluremorum facultates ingenies diuresis abstollens, ditatus inplete fuisset et inter patriciatum gradum et nimiae facultates aelacionem superbiae esset deditus, aduersus Flaochadam tumebat eumque dispicere quonaretur.*'

<sup>116</sup> Ewig, 'Die Fränkischen Teilreiche', p. 119 argues for seeing this as a Burgundian independence movement. Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 156 allows for this possibility but argues more for seeing the conflict in the light of personal rivalry.

conflict, Berthar, was a Transjuran, and thus from Burgundy. Given the Franks and Burgundians appear to have been on opposite sides of the conflict, though, we can see this as a final step in the integration of the Frankish nobility into Burgundy, a long process that had begun around a century earlier. This was, then, a crucial moment in the negotiation of Burgundy's place in the political order centred on Neustria. But the Burgundians were not aiming at independence; rather both sides were working out the precise nature of the relationship between the two *Teilreiche*.

Similar negotiations took place in Austrasia, but with rather different results. The Austrasians, unlike the Burgundians, had no desire to be integrated into the Neustrian political order, and a decade after Chlothar II's victory over Brunhild, the king sent his son Dagobert to be sub-king of Austrasia.<sup>117</sup> Fredegar does not explain the reasoning behind Chlothar's decision, but it is generally assumed Dagobert's appointment took place at the request of the Austrasian nobility, who wanted their own king.<sup>118</sup> After Chlothar's death and Dagobert's accession to the whole *regnum*, the Austrasians again acquired their own king.<sup>119</sup> Fredegar says the appointment of Sigibert III as sub-king of Austrasia took place 'with the counsel and consent' of all the bishops, lords and nobles of Dagobert's kingdom, which implies the participation of nobles from all three *Teilreiche*, not just Austrasia. Again, Fredegar does not explicitly link this to Austrasian demands, but it is not difficult to imagine in both cases the idea came from below rather than from the king.

The Austrasians needed their own king not only to provide internal stability, but also to retain the legitimacy of their rule over the peoples east of the Rhine. This is made clear by the context in which Sigibert III was made king: increased Slavic raids on Thuringia and the east of the *regnum*.<sup>120</sup> Austrasian efforts against the Wends had hitherto been somewhat lacklustre, even when Dagobert returned to the East from Neustria to lead them, because the Austrasians felt they had been treated harshly by the king.<sup>121</sup> Once they had their own king again, though, they apparently fought much more bravely,<sup>122</sup> although it did them little good in the wake of Radulf of Thuringia's rebellion, which saw the defeat of Sigibert and his followers and their

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<sup>117</sup> Fredegar, iv.47.

<sup>118</sup> See, for example, Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 145-6; *Late Merovingian France*, p. 12.

<sup>119</sup> Fredegar, iv.75.

<sup>120</sup> Fredegar, iv.74-5.

<sup>121</sup> Fredegar, iv.68.

<sup>122</sup> Fredegar, iv.75.

ignominious retreat back across the Rhine.<sup>123</sup> We shall return to the full context and implications of this defeat, but let us conclude by stating the relationship between Austrasia and Neustria was far more complex than that between the latter and Burgundy, not least because the presence of a king formed a vital part of Austrasian political activity.<sup>124</sup> What we can see in the aftermath of Chlothar II's victory in 613 and for the remainder of the Merovingian period is a series of negotiations – often violent – between the *Teilreiche*. The concept of Frankish unity and the overall ideal of the *regnum Francorum* were not in question, but attempts to define the relationship between the three sub-kingdoms could and did lead to conflict. Let us explore this further by examining how our authors wrote about their rulers.

### 1.3 Representatives of Unity: The Franks and Their Rulers

Perhaps the best sign of the on-going belief in the ideal of Frankish unity in the late Merovingian period is the way in which authors wrote about the rulers of the *regnum Francorum*. Whether royal or non-royal, and whether men or women, rulers were praised for keeping the peace amongst the Franks and criticised if they caused or allowed peace to break down.<sup>125</sup> There were, of course, nuances in this approach to rulership, and different authors show varying opinions towards certain monarchs; Dagobert I, for example, receives a mixed appraisal from Fredegar but is held up as a model good king by the *LHF*-author, while Clovis II's queen, Balthild, was represented as a saint by one hagiographer and a second Jezebel by another. Other rulers came to be universally reviled; the Neustrian mayor Ebroin was held in contempt and blamed for causing the crisis that followed the death of Chlothar III in 673, and this is true across Merovingian and Carolingian sources,<sup>126</sup> as well as from texts written within and outside the Frankish kingdom.<sup>127</sup> Likewise, opinion about Brunhild, whom Gregory of Tours had represented fairly positively, radically shifted in the years after her defeat by Chlothar II, and sources written after 613 present her in a very different light. Chlothar himself, of course, was one of the few rulers who came to be universally praised as the great re-unifier of the *regnum Francorum*.

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<sup>123</sup> Fredegar, iv.87.

<sup>124</sup> Stegeman, *Austrasian Identity*, pp. 67-85.

<sup>125</sup> On the importance of peace in the early medieval world, see *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 1-2 ff. See also, P.J.E. Kershaw, *Peaceful Kings: Peace, Power, and the Early Medieval Political Imagination* (Oxford, 2011).

<sup>126</sup> For the Carolingian view, see *AMP*, s.a. 688.

<sup>127</sup> For the Anglo-Saxon view, see Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi*, 25-7, 33.

Fredegar balanced his praise of the king with a few token criticisms, but other than this he was the hero of late Merovingian authors. Even the Carolingian usurpation did nothing to decrease the esteem in which he was held; the kings of this dynasty saw him as a model to be emulated and his name as being worthy of use (the Carolingian ‘Lothar’ being the same as Chlothar).

While late Merovingian authors generally seem to have agreed that maintaining the peace was a ruler’s most important duty, there was, inevitably, disagreement about precisely what it took to maintain the peace. No ruler could wield their authority as a tyrant answerable to no-one. We can see throughout the sources considered here a belief in the fundamental relationship between rulers and nobility, in which each side had sometimes to compromise. Rulers, and above all kings, were in the best position to ensure peace, so long as they acted in the right way, but they were not above judgement, especially after they were safely dead, and the writers of narrative texts – whether historical or hagiographical – placed themselves in the position of acting as the judges of the community’s rulers. Let us now consider what Fredegar, the *LHF*-author and their contemporaries had to say about their rulers, and what it can add to our understanding of how they understood and imagined the Frankish community.

When we considered the Frankish *origo gentis* above we saw the kings of the Franks were fundamentally linked to their people because they were descendants of the rulers who had led the fugitives from Troy. It is, therefore, worth beginning with kings before we go on to consider mayors and female rulers. Kings were undoubtedly the most important rulers in the post-Roman West, and the ultimate symbols of authority in the ‘barbarian’ kingdoms that emerged from the fifth century onwards. But what was the best way for a king to wield his authority? For Fredegar, a king had to be active and aggressive towards his enemies, and instil fear in his subjects.<sup>128</sup> For the *LHF*-author, on the other hand, peace was maintained above all through the king’s judgement and wisdom. Of course, Fredegar praised kings for wisdom, and *LHF* contains aggressive kings marching to war. On the whole, though,

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<sup>128</sup> For this approach to their subjects from the Angevin kings in the Central Middle Ages, see J.E.A. Jolliffe, *Angevin Kingship* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1963), pp. 50-109. In fact, Wallace-Hadrill, *Long-Haired Kings*, p. 207 compares the transition from the sixth-century Merovingians to Chlothar II and Dagobert I to the transition in England from the Norman to the Angevin kings, in light of the surviving legal documents.

these sources tend to present us with slightly different ideal versions of kingship, even if the end goal of maintaining the peace remained the same.

For Fredegar, kings who kept their subjects in line were praised for keeping the peace, while those who did not were roundly denounced. The clearest example of this can be seen in the author's ambivalent treatment of Dagobert I.<sup>129</sup> Fredegar had, of course, praised Dagobert's father Chlothar II essentially as the saviour of the *regnum Francorum*:

The whole Frankish kingdom was strengthened, just as it had been ruled by the earlier Chlothar, and with all the treasure it came under the rule of the younger Chlothar, after which he kept it happily for sixteen years, having peace with all the neighbouring peoples. This Chlothar was given to patience, learned in letters, fearing of God, a great patron of churches and priests, a giver of alms to the poor, showing himself kind to all and full of piety. But he enjoyed too regularly the hunting of wild animals and accepted the suggestions of women and girls, for which he was reproached by his nobles.<sup>130</sup>

This description brings Chlothar as close as possible to being the ideal king. It follows closely on his triumphs in battle over his enemies, towards which he worked closely with his nobles, and this list fills out the other requirements of good kingship. Even the two token criticisms do little to diminish our opinion of this king.

As his son, Dagobert I had much to live up to, but by most accounts he did. He was even one of the few early medieval kings to become the subject of a saint's *Life*, written between 800 and 835.<sup>131</sup> Dagobert was made sub-king in Austrasia by his father in 623, and according to Fredegar his reign began well. He consulted and worked with the nobility of *Teilreich*, 'ruling happily', and even held his own when protecting Austrasian interests during disagreements with Chlothar.<sup>132</sup> He also

<sup>129</sup> On Fredegar's attitudes to Chlothar and Dagobert, see Wallace-Hadrill, *Long-Haired Kings*, pp. 206-31, although this overlooks the negative aspects of Fredegar's portrayal of Dagobert.

<sup>130</sup> Fredegar, iv.42: '*Firmatum est omnem regnum Francorum sicut a priorem Chlotharium fuerat dominatum, cunctis thinsauris dicione Chlothariae iunioris subiecitur, quod feliciter post sedecem annis tenuit, pacem habens cum uniuersas gentes uicinas. Iste Chlotharius fuit patientiae deditus, litterum eruditus, timens Deum, ecclesiarum et sacerdotum magnus muneratur, pauperibus aelimosinam tribuens, benignum se omnibus et pietatem plenum ostendens, uenacionem ferarum nimium assiduae utens et postremum mulierum et puellarum suggestionibus nimium annuens. Ob hoc quidem blasphematur a leudibus.*'

<sup>131</sup> *Gesta Dagoberti I regis Francorum*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM*, 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 396-425 (for the date see pp. 396-7). Perhaps tellingly, both his son, Sigibert III, and his grandson, Dagobert II, also became subjects of saints' *Lives* in later centuries, although the latter's *Vita* is rather an amalgamation of details about Dagobert II and Dagobert III. *Vita Dagoberti III regis Francorum*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM*, 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 509-24; Sigebert of Gembloux, *Vita Sigiberti III regis Austrasiae*, ed. M. Bouquet, 'Vita Sancti Sigeberti regis Austrasiae', *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, 2 (Paris, 1869), pp. 597-602. For discussion see Stegeman, *Austrasian Identity*, pp. 121-30.

<sup>132</sup> Fredegar, iv.52-4.



gained a fearsome reputation among the peoples east of the Rhine.<sup>133</sup> Shortly after acceding to the whole *regnum* on his father's death, he visited Burgundy: 'The arrival of Dagobert into the kingdom of Burgundy had roused such fear in the bishops, lords and other important men as to be marvelled at by all; the justice for which he vigorously had called held joy for the poor.'<sup>134</sup> Things soon began to go wrong, though. Dagobert moved his court from Austrasia to Neustria:

At which time he forgot all the justice which formerly he had held dear. He was filled with desire for the properties of churches and nobles and sought to extract new treasures from everywhere. Given over to luxury, he had three queens and many concubines... He had once given out alms in abundance to the poor; if his shrewdness in this had not been hindered by greed, he would have earned the eternal kingdom.<sup>135</sup>

As we shall see in the following chapter, Dagobert's departure from Austrasia also led to a crisis on the eastern border of the *regnum*.<sup>136</sup> Dagobert, then, became the antithesis of his father, and despite his earlier promise, he had become the epitome of bad kingship, which even threatened his immortal soul.

Dagobert did not wholly abandon Austrasia, raising his son as sub-king when the situation there deteriorated,<sup>137</sup> although in the event this did nothing to halt the deterioration, not least because Sigibert III was only a child and was given bad advice by the Austrasian nobility. This last point shows the collapse of Frankish authority east of the Rhine was not the fault solely of the kings; the nobles too failed to fulfil their part of the relationship of rule. The young king Sigibert acted rashly because of his youth, but also because of divisions within the nobility.<sup>138</sup> At the same time, though, it was the duty of the king to keep his nobles united and in line, and for Fredegar this was done, at least partly, through instilling fear in them. The same can be seen in Neustria, where Dagobert's second son, Clovis II, became king after his death. Like his half-brother, Clovis was still a minor at his accession, and while his mother Nantechild ruled with the mayors of the palace Aega and his successor Erchinoald in Neustria, and Flaochad in Burgundy, the regents failed to

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<sup>133</sup> Fredegar, iv.58.

<sup>134</sup> Fredegar, iv.58: '*Tanta timore ponteficibus et procerebus in regnum Burgundiae consistentibus seo et ceteris leudibus aduentus Dagoberti concusserat ut a cunctis esset mirandum; pauperibus iustitiam habentibus gaudium uehementer inroauerat.*'

<sup>135</sup> Fredegar, iv.60: '*cum omnem iustitiam quem prius dilixerat fuisset oblitus, cupiditates instincto super rebus ecclesiarum et leudibus sagace desiderio uellit omnibus undique expoliis nouos implere thinsauos, luxoriam super modum deditus tres habebat maxime ad instar reginas et pluremas concupinas... nam aelymosinam pauperibus super modum largiter aerogabat, si huius rei sagacitas cupiditates instincto non prepedisset, regnum creditor meruisset aeternum.*'

<sup>136</sup> Fredegar, iv.68, 74-5, 77, 87.

<sup>137</sup> Fredegar, iv.75.

<sup>138</sup> Fredegar, iv.87.

prevent the breakdown of peace in Burgundy; indeed, Flaochad was actively involved in the breakdown.<sup>139</sup> There was thus – in Fredegar’s view – an inherent problem when the king was a minor, for, even if he could stand as a symbol of royal authority, he would not be able to intimidate either his enemies or his subjects.

It is partly with this situation – or at least this attitude – in mind we should see the strange story about the wedding night of Childeric I and Basina interpolated into Fredegar’s version of Gregory’s *Histories*.<sup>140</sup> On their wedding night, Basina sends Childeric from their bed and tells him to report what he sees outside. First he sees ‘beasts like a lion, a unicorn and a leopard’, then ‘beasts like bears and wolves’, and finally ‘smaller beasts like dogs and even smaller beasts twisting and pulling at each other.’<sup>141</sup> Basina reveals the significance of these visions as representing Childeric’s descendants: the lion is their son; the unicorn and the leopard their grandsons; the wolves and bears the latter’s offspring. The dogs and smaller beasts represent what will happen in the following generations, ‘when the support (*columpna*) of the kingdom falls apart’: men who rule with the courage of dogs, while the people ‘destroy each other without the fear of rulers.’<sup>142</sup>

The tale seems to be an attack on those kings who did not live up to the standards set by Childeric’s son Clovis I – ‘the bravest of all kings’ in Fredegar’s words<sup>143</sup> – and a literal reading would imply the Frankish *regnum* reached its nadir at the end of the sixth century, under the descendants of Kings Sigibert I and Chilperic I, all of whom came to their thrones as minors and acted under the guidance of the queens-regent Brunhild and Fredegund. If we combine this tale with Fredegar’s general hostility towards Brunhild,<sup>144</sup> to which we shall return shortly, we can sense a distrust of child-kings and over-mighty regents running through the

<sup>139</sup> Fredegar, iv.79-80, iv.83-4, iv.89-90.

<sup>140</sup> On Fredegar’s use of this story to criticise the Merovingians of his own time, see Wood, ‘Deconstructing’, p. 151.

<sup>141</sup> Fredegar, iii.12: ‘*Cumque surrexisset, vidit similitudinem bisteis leonis, unicornis et leopardi ambulantibus... Ille vero cum foris adisset, vidit bysteas similitudinem ursis et lupis deambulantibus... Cumque tercio exisset, vidit bisteas minores similitudinem canis et minoribus bistiis ab invicem detrahentes et voluntantes.*’

<sup>142</sup> Fredegar, iii.12: ‘*dixit Basina ad Childericum: “Que visibiliter vidisti viritate subsistunt. Haec interpretationem habent: Nascitur nobis filius fortitudinem leonis signum et instar tenens; filii viro eius leopardis et unicornis fortitudine signum tenent. Deinde generantur ex illis qui ursis et lupis fortitudinem et voracitatem eorum similabunt. Tercio que vidisti ad discessum columpna regni huius erunt, que regnaverint ad instar canibus et minoribus bisteis; eorum consimilis erit fortitudo. Pluretas autem minoribus bisteis, que ab invicem detrahentes volutabant, populos sine timore principum ab invicem vastantur.*’

<sup>143</sup> Fredegar, iii.12: ‘*ad instar leoni fortissemus cyteris regibus.*’

<sup>144</sup> For example, Fredegar, iii.59, iv.27-30, iv.36. On Fredegar’s attitude to women more generally, see Wood, ‘Fredegar’s Fables’.

*Chronicle*: when weak kings were ruled by others they could not fulfil their correct royal roles and the peace of the *regnum* – whether internal or external – would break down. While this story was originally meant to decry the situation at the turn of the seventh century, we can easily see how it would have had relevance for an author and audience who may have perceived the accessions of the two infant sons of Dagobert as having led to disasters, specifically the collapse of the Austrasian frontier and the conflict between Willibad and Flaochad in Burgundy. Fredegar, compiling his *Chronicle* c.660, could easily also have had in mind the recent accession of the child Chlothar III in Neustria and that of Childebert the Adopted in Austrasia, although unfortunately we do not know his thoughts on these matters.<sup>145</sup>

We receive a somewhat different vision of kingship from the *LHF*-author, who emphasises the unity of the kingdoms under one king to a greater degree than did Fredegar. This should not surprise us, because by the time he wrote all three kingdoms were ruled by one king based in Neustria. Nevertheless, the later author was less concerned than Fredegar with the problem of child-kings, who seem to have become a normal part of the political life of the kingdom by the beginning of the eighth century.<sup>146</sup> As a result the *LHF*-author did not expect the community to be ruled by aggressive kings who instilled fear in their subjects. Certainly, he was happy to narrate the wars of the Merovingians, repeating many such stories from Gregory's *Histories* and adding his own, such as the story of Chlothar and Dagobert's war against the Saxons;<sup>147</sup> he also showed two later Merovingians, Theuderic III and Chilperic II, leading their armies into battle.

War, then, was still one of the ways in which kings could keep the peace, but far more important for this author were wisdom of judgment and good counsel. Two kings in particular stand out as shining exemplars of good kingship. After 'wisely' taking the throne, Dagobert I is described as 'the nurturer of the Franks, most stern in judgments, and a supporter of churches'. True, he 'instilled fear and awe in all the surrounding kingdoms', but, 'a peaceful man like Solomon, he kept peace' in the

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<sup>145</sup> Wood, 'Fredegar's Fables', pp. 364-6.

<sup>146</sup> For a study of how the Roman Empire transitioned into a similar period of rule by child emperors, see M.A. McEvoy, *Child Emperor Rule in the Late Roman West, AD 367-455* (Oxford, 2013).

<sup>147</sup> *LHF*, 41.

*regnum Francorum*.<sup>148</sup> Childebert III, meanwhile, was remembered as ‘a renowned man’, ‘a glorious lord of good memory’ and ‘a just king’.<sup>149</sup>

For later Merovingian authors, the archetypal ‘bad king’ was Childeric II, who first ruled Austrasia and then all three kingdoms after the death of his brother Chlothar III in 673. He was criticised by the *LHF*-author as ‘too frivolous’ and ‘incautious’ and having ‘caused the greatest hatred and scandal among the Franks’ and having ‘greatly oppressed them.’<sup>150</sup> In other words, he did not act in concert with or take the advice of the nobility. Childeric was also heavily criticised by the author of *Passio Leudegarii*, who had to explain Leudegar’s leading role in Childeric’s unpopular reign over the *regnum*.<sup>151</sup> The author tells us Childeric ‘was overcome with youthful fickleness,’<sup>152</sup> which seems at least partly similar to the accusations made by the *LHF*-author. But whereas the later author only mentions Childeric’s Austrasian advisor Wulfoald in passing, the author of *Passio Leudegarii* makes it clear it was Childeric’s advisors who were responsible for the king’s ‘undisciplined, youthful actions.’<sup>153</sup> Indeed, the author makes it explicit: Childeric ‘was corrupted by the counsel of foolish and nearly pagan men.’<sup>154</sup>

Because both these sources were written from a Neustro-Burgundian perspective, we might suspect them of a bias against men who could be seen as Austrasian interlopers. But both authors stress the nobles of Neustria-Burgundy invited Childeric to be their king, although the author of *Passio Leudegarii* hints at some resistance to the idea.<sup>155</sup> Leudegar himself was likely only one of many Neustro-Burgundian nobles who attached himself to Childeric’s newly established court. Likewise, we should be wary not to read too much into the reference to ‘nearly pagan men’ in a hagiographical text criticising those same men for their dissolute lifestyles, which they were allegedly able to enjoy because of their

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<sup>148</sup> *LHF*, 43: ‘*monarchiam in totis tribus regnis sagaciter accepit... Dagobertus... enutritor Francorum, severissimus in iudiciis, ecclesiarum largitor... Timorem et metum in universis regnis circuitum incussit. Ipse pacificus, velut Salomon, quietem regnum obtinuit Francorum.*’

<sup>149</sup> *LHF*, 49-50: ‘*Childebertus... vir inclytus... bonae memoriae gloriosus dominus... rex iustus.*’ On Dagobert and Childebert, see Kershaw, *Peaceful Kings*, p. 129; Dörler, ‘*Liber Historiae Francorum*’, pp. 35-7.

<sup>150</sup> *LHF*, 45.

<sup>151</sup> *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 202-5.

<sup>152</sup> *Passio Leudegarii*, 7, ‘*ut erat iuvenile levitate praeventus*’.

<sup>153</sup> *Passio Leudegarii*, 8, ‘*indisciplinati iuvenalia opera*’.

<sup>154</sup> *Passio Leudegarii*, 7, ‘*stultorum et pene gentilium depravatus concilio*’.

<sup>155</sup> *Passio Leudegarii*, 5.

influence over the king.<sup>156</sup> While *LHF*'s Childeric is somewhat two-dimensional, in the *Passio*'s Childeric we have a king rather similar to Fredegar's Sigibert III; a youthful and indecisive king, to be sure, but only because he was given bad advice by those closest to him. In such cases, though, we can see the importance of the relationship between king and nobility for the stability of the *regnum*.

The *LHF*-author acknowledged the military aspects of kingship, even if he did not expect his contemporary kings to lead the Franks in war – least of all against peripheral peoples. Instead, he saw the later Merovingians as figureheads for the internal peace of the *regnum*, a role which could be fulfilled by a king whatever his age. These kings also represented a sense of continuity in the community's history, as we can see from the way the *LHF*-author traces dynastic succession: from Theuderic III onwards, the relationship of each king to his predecessor (usually his brother or father) is explicitly noted. The presentation of the last three kings to appear in the text highlights this importance.

Chilperic II represents a glaring exception to the rule of dynastic succession because he was not the son of the previous king. Indeed, as the *LHF*-author has it he was not the son of any previous king. He was made king by the Neustrians after the death of Dagobert III in 715,<sup>157</sup> during the escalating civil war that followed the deaths of Pippin II and Grimoald II. The Neustrians presumably felt their new king gave them a chance of reasserting their dominance over the Austrasians, and Chilperic proved an able war-leader, although the *LHF*-author did not praise him for this. Instead the author focusses on his lack of royal credentials: 'the Franks established in the kingdom a former cleric named Daniel whose hair had grown back on his head and they called him Chilperic.'<sup>158</sup> In his charters, Chilperic claimed to be the son of Childeric II,<sup>159</sup> but in *LHF* he is little more than an imposter, although his appointment by the Franks presumably gave him some legitimacy.<sup>160</sup> The *LHF*-author also reports Chilperic's refusal to accept Charles Martel's offer of peace

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<sup>156</sup> *Passio Leudegarii*, 8.

<sup>157</sup> *LHF*, 51-2.

<sup>158</sup> *LHF*, 52: 'Franci nimirum Danielelem quondam clericum, cesarie capitis crescent, eum in regnum stabiliunt atque Chilpericum nuncupant.'

<sup>159</sup> Most explicitly in *Diplomata regum Francorum e stirpe Merovingica*, ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH Diplomata Imperii*, 1 (Hanover, 1872), 84-5 and 90, in which Childeric is referred to as 'genitor noster'. This would have made Chilperic at least 40 on his accession; Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 268.

<sup>160</sup> On Chilperic's place in the 'constructed' Merovingian family tree and the importance of perception for Merovingian kingship, see Wood, 'Deconstructing', especially pp. 160-5.

before the Battle of Vinchy, which, given the importance of kings in keeping the peace, may be a further – albeit tacit – criticism of the king.<sup>161</sup> In any case, while Chilperic may have been the last of the Merovingians to assert any kind of independence from the Pippinids,<sup>162</sup> he does not come off well in *LHF*: in summary, he was of dubious legitimacy and did not act like a later Merovingian should.

Conversely, the author says little of the other two kings who feature in this section of the work, Chlothar IV and Theuderic IV. Of the former, who was little more than an Austrasian puppet-king for Charles Martel, we only learn he was established by Charles but died in the same year.<sup>163</sup> That Chlothar was raised by Charles rather than by the Franks may have given him only a questionable legitimacy in the *LHF*-author's eyes, but he is 'a king by the name of Chlothar' rather than 'a former cleric named Daniel': there is no attempt to establish he was a ruler of dubious origin – he simply was a king. This Chlothar was probably a son of either Theuderic III or Childebert III, or at least claimed to be,<sup>164</sup> and the author's reticence to mention this could stem from his short-lived and uneventful reign as a figurehead for Charles's actions.

As for Theuderic IV, despite writing in the king's sixth year, the author reports nothing after Theuderic's accession. The reason for closing the narrative with this event is clear, though. While the reconciliation between Chilperic II and Charles Martel in 718 effectively brought the civil war to an end, this was not quite enough for the *LHF*-author. Instead he goes on to report the last crucial detail; following Chilperic's death 'the Franks set up Theuderic over them as king... he was a son of Dagobert'.<sup>165</sup> With this simple statement the author shows the stability of the Frankish community has returned and the consensus through which political decisions are made has been restored: the Franks have chosen their king and he is a descendant of Theuderic III. This is the Frankish king as a figurehead for Frankish unity, but also as a symbol of continuity, stability and the status-quo.

We can see similar trends when assessing the presentation of the mayors of the palace. Despite the efforts of some families towards the end of the period, the

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<sup>161</sup> *LHF*, 53.

<sup>162</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 271-2.

<sup>163</sup> *LHF*, 53.

<sup>164</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 349.

<sup>165</sup> *LHF*, 53.

mayoralities of the *Teilreiche* were not hereditary positions, and so mayors could never represent a sense of continuity like the Merovingians themselves did. But mayors were still expected to act as keepers of the peace and stability of the *regnum*, in which role they could prove just as important as kings. For this reason, Fredegar criticised the Burgundian mayor Flaochad: he had made overtures to the Burgundian nobility about protecting their interests at court, but ultimately he had not been able to overcome his personal feud with the patrician Willibad, which in turn had escalated into full-scale factional war in Burgundy.<sup>166</sup>

Meanwhile, Fredegar gives us a generally positive assessment of the Austrasian mayor Pippin I, who worked in concert with the nobility of the *Teilreich* and kept the peace. He describes Pippin as

more cautious than all others and a great counsellor, full of faith and beloved by all for the love of justice in which he had instructed Dagobert while he had enjoyed his friendship. He neither forgot justice nor withdrew from the way of benevolence with Dagobert, acting wisely and displaying caution in all things.<sup>167</sup>

Likewise, ‘Pippin’s death produced more than a little grief in Austrasia, where he had been loved for his devotion to justice and his benevolence.’<sup>168</sup> Pippin is also shown working towards peace not just in Austrasia but also between the *Teilreiche*, by negotiating for Sigibert’s share of Dagobert’s treasure after his death, in which he was accompanied by Chunibert of Cologne. Before taking part in these negotiations, the two men, who had been allies before Dagobert and Pippin’s move to Neustria, ‘came together and, just as their former friendship, they promised vehemently and firmly to support one another forever. And bringing all the Austrasian nobles to them wisely and with sweetness, governing them generously, they would preserve and bind together their friendship.’<sup>169</sup>

Fredegar goes on to report Pippin’s son, Grimoald, ‘was a vigorous man, the image of his father, and loved by many,’ although clearly not enough to be chosen

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<sup>166</sup> Fredegar, iv.89-90.

<sup>167</sup> Fredegar, iv.61: ‘*cum esset cautior cunctis et consilius ualde, plenissimus fide, ab omnibus delictus pro iustitiae amorem, quam Dagoberti consiliose instruxerat dum suo usus fuerat consilio, sibi tamen nec quicquam oblitus iustitiam neque recedens a uiam bonitates, cum ad Dagoberti accederit, prudenter agebat in cunctis et cautum se in omnibus ostendebat.*’

<sup>168</sup> Fredegar, iv.85: ‘*Post fertur anni circolo Pippinus moretur, nec parua dolore eiusdem transitus cumtis generauit in Auster, eo quod ab ipsis pro iustitiae cultum et bonitatem eiusdem delictus fuisset.*’

<sup>169</sup> Fredegar, iv.85: ‘*Pippinus cum Chuniberto... in inuicem conlocati fuerant, et nuper sicut et prius amicitiam uehementer se firmeter perpetuo conseruandum oblegant, omnesque leudis Austrasiorum secum uterque prudenter et cum dulcedene adtragentes, eos benigne gubernantes eorum amicitiam constringent semperque seruandum.*’

as mayor, since the position went to a man named Otto after Pippin's death.<sup>170</sup> Grimoald turned to his father's ally, Bishop Chunibert, and together the two removed Otto, instigating his death at the hands of *dux* Leuthar of Alamannia, allowing Grimoald to take up the mayoralty. But this is thin praise of Grimoald and does little to support the common assertion Fredegar was a partisan of the Pippinid family.<sup>171</sup> Instead, it simply shows he admired mayors who could maintain the consensus of the nobility.

Pippin's Neustrian counterparts in the negotiations over Dagobert's treasure were his fellow mayor of the palace, Aega, and the queen-regent, Clovis's mother Nantechild. Aega, like Pippin, gets a good assessment from Fredegar. He was appointed by Dagobert shortly before the latter's death as a way to safeguard the kingdom.<sup>172</sup>

Truly with Queen Nantechild, Aega... worthily governed the palace and kingdom. He was pre-eminent among the other nobles of Neustria as being imbued in effective prudence and a fullness of patience. He was of noble birth, had great wealth, pursued justice, was well educated and prepared with answers; he was only reproached by many for being devoted to greed.<sup>173</sup>

But despite this one flaw, Fredegar stresses it was Aega who returned everything that had been taken by Dagobert for the royal fisc.<sup>174</sup> Aega's successor as mayor was Erchinoald, also described positively as Fredegar as

a patient man, full of benevolence, he was tolerant and cautious, humble and good-willed towards priests, answering all benevolently, and neither swollen with pride nor raging with passion. In his time he was continually pursuing such peace as would be pleasing to God. He was wise, but above all candid, and though he enriched himself, he was loved by all.<sup>175</sup>

We can see, then, Fredegar heaped praise on any who worked towards peace, and was not necessarily biased towards one *Teilreich*, or even one family.

<sup>170</sup> Fredegar, iv.86: '*Grimoaldus filius eius cum essit strinuos, ad instar patris diligeretur a plurimis.*'

<sup>171</sup> For example, Wood, 'Fredegar's Fables', p. 366.

<sup>172</sup> Fredegar, iv.79.

<sup>173</sup> Fredegar, iv.80: '*Aega uero cum rigina Nantilde... condigne palacium gubernat et regnum. Aega uero inter citiris primatibus Neustreci prudencius agens et plenitudinem pacienciae inbutus cumtis erat precellentior. Eratque genere nobele, opes habundans, iusticiam sectans, aeruditus in uerbis, paratus in rispunsis; tantummodo a plurimis blasphemabatur, eo quod esset auariciae deditus.*'

<sup>174</sup> Fredegar, iv.80: '*Facultatibus pluremorum, que iusso Dagoberti in regnum Burgundiae et Neptreco inlecece fuerant usurpate et fisci dicionebus contra modum iusticiae redacte, consilio Aegane omnibus restaurantur.*'

<sup>175</sup> Fredegar, iv.84: '*Eratque homo paciens, bonetate plenus, cum esset paciens et cautus, humiletatem et benignam uoluntatem circa sacerdotibus omnesbusque pacienter et benigne respondens nullamque tumens superbiam neque cupiditatem saeuiaebat; tanta in suo tempore pacem sectans fuit ut Deum esset placebelem. Erat sapiens, sed in primum maxime cum simplicitate, rebus minsuratem ditatus, ab omnibus erat dilectus.*'



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Such sentiments can be seen in other late Merovingian sources, although the *LHF*-author provides a stark contrast to Fredegar's reserved praise of Grimoald I. For the later author, this mayor had committed the heinous crime of exiling a rightful heir to the throne and replacing him not with an alternative Merovingian candidate, but – supposedly – with his own son. We have already considered this so-called coup above, so here it will suffice to say this Grimoald, who provokes war with Neustria and is tortured to death as one 'who had acted against his lord',<sup>176</sup> is a far cry from the peacekeeper of Fredegar's *Chronicle*. It suggests, though, this author shared Fredegar's general outlook on the role of mayors.

For this reason he was well-disposed towards the Neustrian mayor Warrato, 'an illustrious man', who emerges as the leader of a group which encouraged peace between Neustria and Austrasia and attempted to end the ill will that had grown up between the *Teilreiche* during Ebroin's mayoralty. Warrato is celebrated for receiving hostages from and making peace with the Pippin II, and anarchy and war overtake the *regnum* both when he is temporarily deposed and after his death.<sup>177</sup> The *LHF*-author presents Pippin II somewhat ambivalently, although he heaps praise on Pippin's sons Grimoald II and Charles Martel. All three of these Austrasians are presented as working towards, maintaining or restoring the peace, albeit implicitly in Pippin's case through his alliance with Warrato. Grimoald II is described as 'pious, modest, mild and just',<sup>178</sup> a description more concise but ultimately similar to those given by Fredegar for the men he admired. Charles, meanwhile, is described as a 'fastidious, distinguished, and practical man.'<sup>179</sup> Not only this, but when imprisoned by his step-mother Plectrude (to whom we shall return), he had God on his side.<sup>180</sup> Above all, though he attempted to sue for peace with the Neustrians in the face of their hostilities and negotiated with the Aquitanian *dux* Eudo for the return of Chilperic II after the latter had fled across the Loire.<sup>181</sup> Ultimately, then, it was the Pippinids who did more than any other noble family to maintain peace in the first quarter of the eighth century, and for this they earned the praise of a Neustrian author, showing – as with Fredegar – peace was more important than regional bias.

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<sup>176</sup> *LHF*, 43: 'in domino suo exercuit.'

<sup>177</sup> *LHF*, 47-8.

<sup>178</sup> *LHF*, 50: 'Eratque ipse Grimoaldus maiorum domus pius, modestus, mansuetus et iustus.'

<sup>179</sup> *LHF*, 49: 'virum elegantem, egregium atque utilem.'

<sup>180</sup> *LHF*, 51.

<sup>181</sup> *LHF*, 52-3.

Just as they presented us with an archetypal bad king in Childeric II, both the *LHF*-author and the author of *Passio Leudegarii* present us with an archetypal bad mayor in Ebroin. Ebroin's origins are obscure, and it seems likely when he came to power it was as the representative of a group opposed to his predecessor Erchinoald's faction.<sup>182</sup> He may have been elected in somewhat controversial circumstances, as the *LHF*-author suggests,<sup>183</sup> but according to the author of *Vita Balthildis* he, Lord Audoin and their supporters maintained the peace through the 660s,<sup>184</sup> even to the extent of forcing the queen regent Balthild into monastic retirement – although as we shall see, the author of her *Vita* put a spin on this.<sup>185</sup> Ebroin started down the course which would earn him such a negative reputation with the death of Chlothar III and the accession of his brother Theuderic III in 673.

We have already summarised the events which followed the death of Chlothar above, so let us now focus on the crimes of which Ebroin was accused. According to Leudegar's biographer, his first crime was making the decision to raise a new king alone, without consulting the rest of the Neustrian nobility, and then monopolising the person of the king and preventing other nobles from coming to court, although the *LHF*-author remains studiously vague about this.<sup>186</sup> Both authors agree, though, he was responsible for breaking the consensus in Neustria following Childeric II's murder, although they differ in the precise details. The *LHF*-author has him escape his monastic imprisonment to go to war with Leudegar and his allies, while Leudegar's biographer admits Ebroin and Leudegar left their monastic confinement together and only later did Ebroin join with those who proclaimed Clovis as king in opposition to Theuderic, adding Ebroin's alliance with the Austrasians.<sup>187</sup> For both authors he was also a tyrant who was willing to commit fraud and murder those who opposed him, not least of whom was, of course,

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<sup>182</sup> See P. Fouracre, 'Merovingians, Mayors of the Palace and the Notion of a "Low-Born" Ebroin', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 57 (1984), 1-14.

<sup>183</sup> *LHF*, 45: 'At that time, the mayor of the palace Erchinoald having died, the Franks vacillated in uncertainty, established Ebroin in the high honour as mayor of the palace in the king's court, determining this by counsel'; '*Eo tempore, defuncto Erchonoldo maiorum domo, Franci in incertum vacillantes, prefinito consilio Ebroino huius honoris altitudine maiorum domo in aula regis statuunt.*'

<sup>184</sup> *Vita Balthildis*, 5: 'then indeed, the kingdom of the Franks remained in peace with the excellent leaders Bishop Chrodbert of Paris, Lord Audoin and Ebroin, the mayor of the palace together with other nobles and many others'; '*tunc etenim precellentibus principibus Chrodoberhto episcopo Parisiaco et domno Audoeno seu et Ebroino maiore domus cum reliquis senioribus vel ceteris quam pluribus, et regno quidem Francorum in pace consistenti.*' See *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>185</sup> *Vita Balthildis*, 10.

<sup>186</sup> Compare *Passio Leudegarii*, 5 and *LHF*, 45.

<sup>187</sup> Compare *LHF*, 45 and *Passio Leudegarii*, 16-28.

Leudegar.<sup>188</sup> The *LHF*-author further reports Ebroin swearing false oaths which led to his capturing and killing both his Neustrian rival Leudesius and Martin, Pippin II's chief ally.<sup>189</sup> In all his lying and scheming, then, Ebroin is the opposite of the Pippinids who work towards consensus between the *Teilreiche*.

The third group of rulers we shall consider is the women rulers, primarily queens, but also the wife of Pippin II. We shall see such women were just as integral a part of the community as their male counterparts, not least in the late Merovingian period because they often took on the role of regents for child kings. This was a potentially controversial and divisive role for women because it gave them a central position in the usually male-dominated royal court. Indeed, there was often a gendered element to the way in which our authors wrote about women, especially when the latter were being portrayed negatively,<sup>190</sup> but the overall picture that emerges from the sources is women ultimately were not that different from their male counterparts: they were praised for maintaining peace and consensus or they were criticised for threatening the stability of the *regnum*. In this sense, there is not much to separate Brunhild – an archetypal bad queen – from Ebroin, or the saintly Balthild from Chlothar II.<sup>191</sup>

Brunhild is perhaps the most famous woman who exercised power in the *regnum Francorum*.<sup>192</sup> She was a Visigothic princess – the daughter of King Athanagild – who came to Francia in 567 to marry King Sigibert I.<sup>193</sup> Gregory of Tours praised the splendour of her marriage and her swift conversion from Arianism to Catholicism, and his *Histories* feature many comparisons between the 'good' queen Brunhild and her Neustrian counterpart, the 'bad' queen Fredegund. Yet it

<sup>188</sup> *Passio Leudegarii*, 30-5. See also *LHF*, 45.

<sup>189</sup> *LHF*, 45-6.

<sup>190</sup> There had been much scholarly discussion of women in the early medieval world in recent decades. See above all J.L. Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels: Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History', in J.L. Nelson (ed.), *Power and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1986), pp. 1-48; Nelson, 'Gender and Genre'; J.L. Nelson, 'Women at the Court of Charlemagne: A Case of Monstrous Regime?', in J.L. Nelson (ed.), *The Frankish World, 750-900* (London, 1996), pp. 223-42; S.F. Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500-900* (Philadelphia, 1981); For more general surveys see P. Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1983); contributions to W. Affeldt (ed.) *Frauen in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter* (Sigmaringen, 1990); S. Wittern, *Frauen, Heiligkeit und Macht. Lateinische Frauenviten aus dem 4. bis 7. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1994); J.T. Schulenburg, *Forgetful of Their Sex: Female Sanctity and Society ca. 500-1100* (Chicago and London, 1998).

<sup>191</sup> Nelson, 'Jezebels', pp. 47-8.

<sup>192</sup> See Nelson, 'Jezebels', pp. 9-16, 23-31; G. Heydemann, 'Zur Gestaltung der Rolle Brunhildes in merowingischer Historiographie', in R. Corradini, R. Meens, C. Pössel and P. Shaw (eds), *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 2004), pp. 73-85.

<sup>193</sup> *DLH*, iv.27.

seems likely Gregory's praise of Brunhild covered up criticisms that were already being voiced during her lifetime, and she and Fredegund may not have been so different after all.<sup>194</sup> The images of Brunhild and Fredegund that have come down to us are defined in a large part by their relationships with the men in their lives; their husbands and children, and grandchildren and great-grandchildren in Brunhild's case, as well as the bishops of the kingdoms. Yet also important was their relationship with each other, which was determined above all by Chilperic I's alleged murder of Brunhild's sister, his own wife Galswinth.<sup>195</sup> Likewise, Brunhild's posthumous reputation has been determined as much, if not more, by the negative portrayals of her in Fredegar's *Chronicle* and the *Lives* of Saints Columbanus and Desiderius, as by Gregory's generally positive depiction.

Brunhild briefly fell from power after the death of her husband,<sup>196</sup> but rose again when her son, Childebert II, attained his majority. She retained her position of authority during the minority of his sons, and was particularly involved in the regency of Theudebert II, perhaps because he was king of Austrasia, where Brunhild's supporters were located.<sup>197</sup> There was, however, some disagreement between the king and his grandmother, and she fled to the court of her other grandson, Theuderic II, in Burgundy.<sup>198</sup> There she turned Theuderic against his brother,<sup>199</sup> which led to the death of Theudebert and the annexation of Austrasia by Theuderic in 612.<sup>200</sup> During this period, Brunhild also encouraged her grandsons to pursue a war against their cousin, Chlothar II of Neustria, the son of Fredegund, who had died in 597.<sup>201</sup> This war, however, proved her undoing. In 613 Theuderic suddenly died, and instead of dividing the two *Teilreiche* between his sons, Brunhild made the eldest, Sigibert II, sole king.<sup>202</sup> A large section of the Austrasian and Burgundian nobilities, led by the faction of Pippin I and Bishop Arnulf of Metz, abandoned her to join Chlothar, which shows serious resistance to her authority had

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<sup>194</sup> See Dailey, *Gregory of Tours*, pp. 100-74.

<sup>195</sup> *DLH*, iv.28.

<sup>196</sup> *DLH*, v.1. For her subsequent involvement with Chilperic's son Merovech, see *DLH*, v.2-3.

<sup>197</sup> *DLH*, v.46. See Nelson, 'Jezebels', pp. 10-12.

<sup>198</sup> Fredegar, iv.19. This appears to have been related to Theudebert's marriage. Brunhild apparently saw the marriages of her male descendants as threats to her own power; see Nelson, 'Jezebels', pp. 14-16; Stafford, *Queens*, p. 110.

<sup>199</sup> Fredegar, iv.27.

<sup>200</sup> Fredegar, iv.38.

<sup>201</sup> Fredegar, iv.17.

<sup>202</sup> Fredegar, iv.39-40.

finally arisen in her kingdoms. She was defeated, captured, accused of the murder of many Frankish nobles and kings, and killed.<sup>203</sup>

In the end, Brunhild had simply become too powerful for her own good, and a *damnatio memoriae* seems to have developed almost immediately; the earliest hostile portrayal is that found in the Visigothic King Sisebut's *Vita Desiderii*, written less than a decade after Brunhild's demise.<sup>204</sup> Here, in Jonas of Bobbio's *Vita Columbani*, from which Fredegar borrowed extensively,<sup>205</sup> and in the near-contemporary anonymous *Passio Desiderii*,<sup>206</sup> the queen is presented as the real power behind the throne of Theuderic II, a tyrannical persecutor responsible for the death of one saint and the exile of another.<sup>207</sup> The victorious Chlothar II had every reason to encourage the idea Brunhild was responsible for the problems the Franks had recently faced, while Brunhild herself left behind no one who had any reason to defend her memory. Thus Gregory's demure and pious princess was transformed into a proverbial Jezebel whose name became synonymous with the concept of the abuse of power by women.

Further early evidence for the denunciation of Brunhild comes from a text preserved in the manuscript London, British Library ms. add. 16974 and recently discussed by Ian Wood, which was probably written during Chlothar II's reign.<sup>208</sup> The text, which is appended to the *Chronicle* of Marius of Avenches and consists primarily of a list of regnal and indictional years for the Byzantine Emperor Tiberius II and edited versions of twelve entries from the *Chronicle* of Isidore of Seville, concludes with a brief narrative of the Frankish civil war of 613. This narrative proclaims Brunhild an evil usurper and celebrates Chlothar for deposing her and reuniting the *regnum*.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Fredegar, iv.40-2.

<sup>204</sup> Sisebut, *Vita vel Passio sancti Desiderii*, in J. Gil (ed.), *Miscellanea Wisigothica* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Seville, 1991). On this text, see J. Fontaine, 'King Sisebut's *Vita Desiderii* and the Political Function of Visigothic Hagiography', in E. James (ed.), *Visigothic Spain; New Approaches* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 93-129.

<sup>205</sup> Fredegar, iv.36.

<sup>206</sup> *Passio sancti Desiderii episcopi et martyris*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM*, 3 (Hanover, 1896), pp. 638-45. On the possibility this text was composed in the seventh century and was the model for Jonas's account, see Wood, '*Vita Columbani*', pp. 70-1.

<sup>207</sup> Compare Sisebut, *Vita Desiderii*, especially 15-21 to Jonas, *Vita Columbani*, i.18-20, i.27-9.

<sup>208</sup> I.N. Wood, 'Chains of Chronicles: the example of London, British Library ms. Add. 16974', in R. Corradini, M. Diesenberger and M. Niederkorn, *Zwischen Niederschrift und Wiederschrift: Frühmittelalterliche Hagiographie und Historiographie im Spannungsfeld von Kompendienüberlieferung und Editionstechnik* (Vienna, 2010), pp. 67-77.

<sup>209</sup> See Wood, 'Chains', pp. 76-7 for edition of the text.

Writing around fifty years later, Fredegar explicitly in places the blame for the Franks' ills before 613 at Brunhild's door. She dominated the court of her grandson, Theuderic II, appointing her favourites to key positions,<sup>210</sup> and deposing or murdering those who displeased her.<sup>211</sup> She was also responsible for goading Theuderic into war with his brother, whom she claimed was not really the son of Childebert II, but actually the son of a gardener.<sup>212</sup> Fredegar even sets up Brunhild's evil well in advance of these events by completely re-writing the section of Gregory's *Histories* dealing with her arrival in Francia.<sup>213</sup> He removed Gregory's highly complementary description of the Visigothic princess, including her conversion to Catholicism, instead explaining her name was originally Bruna: immediately on her arrival in Francia she convinced her new husband to murder the mayor Gogo – a clear falsehood, since Gogo is known to have outlived Sigibert.<sup>214</sup> Fredegar then adds the most damning, but also most bizarre pre-figuring of Brunhild's future evil with an alleged sibylline prophecy:

Such evil and shedding of blood were caused in Francia by Brunhild's counsel that the prophecy of the Sibyl was fulfilled, which said: 'Bruna comes from the regions of Spain, and before her gaze many peoples will be destroyed.' Truly she will then be broken by the hooves of horses.<sup>215</sup>

Brunhild fills a similar role in *LHF*, first turning Theuderic against Chlothar then against Theudebert.<sup>216</sup> There are some differences here, though. In *LHF*, Brunhild claims Theudebert is the son of Childebert II and a concubine, rather than the son of a gardener, but later reveals he actually is Theuderic's brother after all, provoking the latter to attempt to kill her.<sup>217</sup> Though this attempt failed, it turned Brunhild against her grandson, whom she killed with poison before also killing his sons. However, while *LHF*'s version of Brunhild is perhaps even more explicitly

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<sup>210</sup> Fredegar, iv.19 (the unnamed Desiderius to the bishopric of Auxerre), iv.24 and iv.27 (her alleged lover Protadius).

<sup>211</sup> Fredegar, iv.21 (the patrician Aegyla), iv.24 and iv.32 (Desiderius of Vienne), iv.28 (*dux* Uncelen), iv.29 (the patrician Wulf).

<sup>212</sup> Fredegar, iv.27.

<sup>213</sup> Fredegar, iii.57-9.

<sup>214</sup> *DLH*, vi.1; *Epistolae Austrasiacae*, 13, 16, 22, 48.

<sup>215</sup> Fredegar, iii.59: '*Tanta mala et effusione sanguinum a Brunehildis consilium in Francia factae sunt, ut prophetia Saeville impleretur, dicens: "Veniens Bruna de partibus Spaniae, ante cuius conspectum multae gentes peribunt." Haec vero aequitum calcibus dirumpetur.*' For discussion of Fredegar's purpose here, see Dailey, *Gregory of Tours*, pp. 103-5. For the sibylline nature of Fredegar's quotation see J. Woodruff (trans.), *The Historia Epitomata (Third Book) of the Chronicle of Fredegar: An Annotated Translation and Historical Analysis of Interpolated Material* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1987), pp. 65-7, n. 151.

<sup>216</sup> *LHF*, 37-8.

<sup>217</sup> *LHF*, 39.

responsible than Fredegar's for the wars which led to Chlothar's triumph in 613, and for the murders of kings, the *LHF*-author actually cleaves much more closely to Gregory's presentation of both Brunhild and Fredegund in the earlier sections of his work.<sup>218</sup> This provides a more nuanced 'decline' of Brunhild and ambivalent portrayal of Fredegund than we might expect from a Neustrian author.<sup>219</sup> Nevertheless, in the late Merovingian portrayal of Brunhild, we still have a figure held up as guilty of provoking war and disrupting the stability of the *regnum*, even if it had never been particularly stable or free of war during the sixth century.

The mid-seventh century Queen Balthild is less famous than Brunhild, but her story is just as interesting, even if much of it, including some of the most important details, must remain speculation due to the paucity of sources that mention her.<sup>220</sup> The most substantial of these is the *Vita Balthildis*, written not long after her death.<sup>221</sup> Her presentation as a saint immediately tells us Balthild was remembered in quite the opposite way to Brunhild. Yet Balthild was just as rigorous in the promotion of her family's interests, and it may be that, like Brunhild, it was an accumulation of too much power and the alienation of an important section of the nobility that led to her downfall, although in Balthild's case this meant monastic retirement as a nun at the Abbey of Chelles rather than death.

Like Brunhild, Balthild came to the *regnum Francorum* as a foreigner: she was a Saxon 'from across the sea' – that is an Anglo-Saxon – who came to Francia as a slave in the household of the Neustrian mayor of palace Erchinoald.<sup>222</sup> Although nothing is known about her family, it seems likely she was descended from nobility if not royalty, and a seventh-century seal-matrix bearing her name found outside Norwich in Norfolk may – if it belonged to this Balthild – suggest she retained ties

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<sup>218</sup> Gerberding, *Rise*, pp. 40-5.

<sup>219</sup> Gerberding, *Rise*, pp. 154-7, although Gerberding perhaps overemphasises the author's negative approach to Brunhild and positive approach to Fredegund.

<sup>220</sup> On Balthild, see Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels', pp. 16-23, 31-43.

<sup>221</sup> On the text, see *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 97-118 (pp.114-15 for the date of composition). Fouracre and Gerberding argue for male authorship (p. 115); for the possibility of female authorship, see Wemple, *Women*, pp.182-3.

<sup>222</sup> *Vita Balthildis*, 2: 'de partibus transmarinis... ex genere Saxonum.' On the relations between the Anglo-Saxon and Frankish courts in the sixth and seventh centuries, see I.N. Wood, 'The Continental Connections of Anglo-Saxon courts from Æthelberht to Offa', *Settimane di Studio*, 58, *Le relazioni internazionali nell'alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 2011), pp. 443-80.

to her family's homeland.<sup>223</sup> While living as a slave she came to the attention of the Neustrian King Clovis II – perhaps through the design of Erchinoald as a way of cementing and improving his own position – and the two married c.648. Balthild seems to have had no trouble in assuming a leading role in the regency government of her eldest son Chlothar III after the death of her husband, but she must also have been involved in the mysterious political events of Grimoald's so-called coup that followed the death of her husband's brother King Sigibert III.<sup>224</sup> In 662, her son Childeric II was made king of Austrasia, marrying his cousin Bilichild, the daughter of Sigibert III and Chimnechild. We may assume, with Matthias Becher, this marriage was the end result of an alliance between Chimnechild and the Neustrians against Grimoald, which led to latter's death but failed to depose his king, Childebert 'the Adopted'. After the latter's death the Neustrians decided to promote one of their own as king rather than recalling Chimnechild's son, Dagobert, from his Irish exile, forcing the Austrasian queen into a compromise whereby her daughter would marry the new king.<sup>225</sup>

Nevertheless, in 664, with two of her sons ruling in the *regnum Francorum*, Balthild entered monastic retirement in Chelles. She had apparently already long been involved in ecclesiastical politics,<sup>226</sup> a policy which would be important for both her defenders and her critics. Her biographer used this to show the queen's piety, and claimed entering a monastery was something she had wished to do for some time, but which the Frankish nobility only allowed after the death of one of her supporters, Bishop Sigobrand of Paris, as a way of avoiding retribution.<sup>227</sup> It seems clear there was more going on than could be said in a saint's life, and by this stage there may have been a growing rift between the queen and the dominant faction of the nobility.<sup>228</sup> Balthild appears to have adapted quickly to the monastic life, though, and while she was never abbess herself, she was just as influential in this community as she had been in that of the wider kingdom.

While entering the monastic life may have been enough to protect Balthild from the kind of *damnatio memoriae* Brunhild suffered, the negative side-effects of

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<sup>223</sup> See L. Webster, '57. Norwich area, Norfolk: Gold swivelling bezel from a Frankish seal-ring', *Treasure Annual Report* (1998-1999), 31-2.

<sup>224</sup> Wood, 'Fredegar's Fables', pp. 364-5.

<sup>225</sup> Becher, 'Die Sogenannte Staatsreich', pp. 137-42.

<sup>226</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 197-202; *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 108-12.

<sup>227</sup> *Vita Balthildis*, 10.

<sup>228</sup> *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 112-14.



the power she accumulated during Chlothar's minority did not go unnoticed. Her biographer hinted not all remembered the queen fondly when he mentioned he was writing for her 'faithful' rather than her 'detractors'.<sup>229</sup> He presented Balthild's deep involvement in Church affairs as a sign of her piety before her monastic retirement, but this was not the only way to read her ecclesiastical policies. In the early eighth-century *Vita Wilfridi*, Balthild is accused of the murder of nine bishops, including Aunemund of Lyons and is compared to the Biblical Jezebel,<sup>230</sup> although the *Acta Aunemundi* do not explicitly accuse Balthild of the murder.<sup>231</sup> Such 'murders' should be seen as part of the factional politics of the seventh century, and as part of Balthild's way of both appeasing powerful members of the nobility and getting her supporters into positions of authority. But it also shows the memory of even a supposedly saintly woman was never a simple matter. One hagiographer's saint was another's persecutor.

When we move to the sources of the eighth century we encounter the wives of the Pippinid family more often than the wives of the Merovingians. Plectrude was without doubt one of the most important of these. As the first wife of Pippin II, she was the matriarch of what was, by the end of the seventh century, the second most important family in the *regnum Francorum*. Her eldest son Drogo (d.708) was *dux* of Champagne, while her second son Grimoald II and his son Theudoald both became mayors in Neustria.<sup>232</sup> It is also worth mentioning she was one of several women whose importance to the Pippinid family was not just in their producing sons and heirs, but also in the lands and estates they brought to the family and the alliances they made possible.<sup>233</sup>

In *LHF* – the first narrative source to mention her – Plectrude appears as Pippin's 'most noble and most wise wife.'<sup>234</sup> The *LHF*-author makes it clear

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<sup>229</sup> *Vita Balthildis*, 1: 'Here, therefore, we are able to show the truth, not so much to her detractors, but rather to her faithful'; '*Hic ergo non tam detractoribus, sed potius fidelibus, quam potuimus, veritatem ostendimus.*'

<sup>230</sup> Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi*, 6. See Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels', pp. 35-8. Interestingly, one of the two surviving manuscripts of the *Vita* gives Brunhild rather than Balthild as the Jezebel-like queen; see Levison, *Vita Wilfridi Episcopi*, p. 199, n. 2-3.

<sup>231</sup> *Acta Aunemundi*, 3-4. For a comparison of the sources, see *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 172-6

<sup>232</sup> *LHF*, 48-9.

<sup>233</sup> Wood, 'Genealogy Defined by Women: The Case of the Pippinids', in L. Brubaker and J.M.H. Smith (eds), *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 234-56.

<sup>234</sup> *LHF*, 48: '*Eratque Pippino principe uxor nobilissima et sapientissima nomine Plectrudis.*'

Plectrude was a force for peace in the aftermath of the deaths of Pippin and Grimoald: ‘At this time, Pippin was seized by a strong fever and died... Plectrude was governing everything with her grandson and the king under discreet direction.’<sup>235</sup> Initially, then, the Neustrians seem to have cooperated with her in raising her grandson to the mayoralty despite his probably still being a minor. They soon became disillusioned with the Pippinid domination of the kingdom, though, and turned against Plectrude and Theudoald, raising Ragamfred as their new mayor. Plectrude then retreated to Austrasia, where she held her step-son Charles Martel under guard.<sup>236</sup> Here the *LHF*-author is more ambiguous; he says nothing explicitly negative about Plectrude, but Charles was one of his heroes, and escaped his imprisonment ‘with God’s help,’ leaving the audience with the impression God disapproved of Plectrude’s actions. As with other members of the Pippinid family, the *LHF*-author had no problem seeing Plectrude as a promoter of peace, but it seems after the outbreak of the war Plectrude found herself caught between two factions more powerful than her own: those of the Neustrians and of Charles Martel. Thus, Plectrude was superseded as a force for good and relegated to a more ambiguous position in the rest of the author’s narrative.

Given Plectrude’s prominence in the Pippinid family and her opposition to Charles Martel, it is worth briefly considering her presentation by two Carolingian authors, Fredegar’s continuator and the *AMP*-author. Both authors wrote under the patronage of Charles Martel’s relatives and present Plectrude in a more overtly hostile light than *LHF*. Fredegar’s continuator borrowed his first reference directly from *LHF*, so Plectrude is still introduced as Pippin’s ‘noble and most prudent wife’.<sup>237</sup> Nevertheless, she is not the force for peace she had been in *LHF*:

After Pippin’s death, his wife Plectrude conducted everything of his council and all direction herself. Eventually the Franks turned on each other in rebellion, taking useless counsel and engaging in battle against Theudoald and the former nobles of Pippin and Grimoald.<sup>238</sup>

Seen in this light, Plectrude’s imprisonment of Charles against God’s will seems more consistent, as she has been established as a threat to the stability of the

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<sup>235</sup> *LHF*, 51: ‘Eo tempore Pippinus febre valida correptus, mortuus est... Plectrudis quoque cum nepotibus suis vel rege cuncta gubernabat sub discreta regimine.’

<sup>236</sup> *LHF*, 51.

<sup>237</sup> *Continuationes*, 5: ‘Eratque ei uxor nobilis et prudentissima nomine Plectrudis.’

<sup>238</sup> *Continuationes*, 8: ‘Post obitum quoque eius Plectrudis matron praefata suo consilio atque regimine cuncta sese agebat. Demum Franci mutuo in sedicionem uersi, consilio inutile accepto... contra Theudoaldum et leudis Pippino quondam atque Grimoaldo inierunt certamen.’

*regnum*.<sup>239</sup> The presentation found in *AMP* is even harsher. Here Plectrude is overlooked as the mother of Pippin's children, who themselves still receive a positive treatment, although it is worth noting the *AMP*-author also ignores Pippin's second wife Alpaïda, the mother of Charles Martel.<sup>240</sup> After Pippin's death:

Charles, who his father had left behind as the only heir worthy of such power, was violently enduring the treacheries of his stepmother. Because Plectrude, the mother of Grimoald, desired to support Pippin's grandson Theudoald, she was keeping Charles from the legitimate governing of his father's authority, and with the infant she was presuming to handle the reins of the great kingdom by womanly counsel. But because she had decided with feminine cunning to rule more cruelly than is necessary, she quickly turned the wrath of the Neustrian Franks to the destruction of Pippin's grandson and the leaders who were with him.<sup>241</sup>

With these three presentations of Plectrude, we can see a debate about her which emerged in the years of Charles Martel's rule, and which probably continued after his death. Already the *LHF*-author, who was well-inclined towards the Pippinids, had to present her in an ambivalent light due to her rivalry with Charles. While the latter had almost certainly attempted to reconcile his surviving step-relatives after his triumph,<sup>242</sup> Plectrude herself remained a fair target for the attempts by historians to assign blame for the turbulent years that followed Pippin II's death. Let us now consider the debates about community which took place under the early Carolingians in more detail.

## 1.4 Community Re-Imagined: The Carolingians and Their Subjects

At first glance, the historical texts of the early Carolingian period do not appear greatly different from what had come before: they narrate the deeds and wars of the Franks.<sup>243</sup> Indeed, most authors were keen to stress at least notional continuity with the Merovingian past in order to create a vision of continuous history which the

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<sup>239</sup> *Continuationes*, 8.

<sup>240</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 693.

<sup>241</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 714: '*Carlous vero, quem solum pater dignum heredem tantae potestatis superstitem reliquerat, novercales insidias graviter tolerabat. Plectrudis etenim, Grimoaldi genitrix, dum nepoti suo Theudoaldo favere desiderat, Carolum a legitima paterni imperii gubernatione prohibebat, ipsa cum infantulo muliebri consilio tanti regni habenas tractare presumebat. Quod dum crudelius quam oporteret astu femineo disponere decreverat, iram Niwstrium Francorum in nepotism sui interitum et principum qui cum eo exstiterant celeriter convertit.*'

<sup>242</sup> Wood, 'Genealogy', pp. 246-52.

<sup>243</sup> For the perceptions of Franks and Frankishness in the early Carolingian period, see J.L. Nelson, 'Frankish Identity in Charlemagne's Empire', in I.H. Garipzanov, P.J. Geary and P. Urbańczyk (eds), *Franks, Northmen and Slavs: Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 71-83; H. Reimitz, 'Omnes Franci: Identifications and Identities of the Early Medieval Franks', in I. H. Garipzanov, P. J. Geary and P. Urbańczyk (eds.), *Franks, Northmen and Slavs: Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 51-68.

Carolingians were simply inheriting from their predecessors. Of our sources, the *Continuations* have the greatest sense of continuity, adding to the accounts of both Fredegar and the *LHF*-author, with the latter's account being used to bridge the gap between Fredegar and the eighth century.<sup>244</sup> The continuator, then, presents his history firmly within the scope of shared Frankish history. There is even a new version of the Trojan origin story, the so-called *Historia de Origine Francorum*, an adaptation of Dares the Phrygian's *De Excidio Troiae Historia*.<sup>245</sup> In fact, the Trojan origin story remained an important part of Frankish history and was still believed by many into the eighteenth century.<sup>246</sup>

The *AMP*-author also began with Merovingian history, but in a radically different way to Fredegar's continuator. Whereas the latter largely retained his model's narrative – changing only minor details – *AMP* are only loosely based on the account found in *LHF*, instead focussing from the beginning on Pippin II and his descendants, with the Merovingians reduced to a subordinate role.<sup>247</sup> Unlike Fredegar's continuator, who presented the Pippinid-Carolingians simply as taking up the reins of Frankish rule as the heirs of the Merovingians, the *AMP*-author presents them as replacements for the Merovingians. Einhard took a similar approach in his *Life of Charlemagne*, which begins with an account of Merovingian decline and the deposition of Childeric III by Pippin III.<sup>248</sup> There is thus, in Einhard's account, an element of continuity with the Merovingian past, but once more the Carolingians are presented as replacements rather than heirs to the Merovingians. While the *AMP*-author and Einhard both maintained an interest in long-term Frankish history, they used it primarily to justify the Carolingian usurpation of royal power. Of the Carolingian authors on whom we are focussing here, only the *ARF*-author attempted to present a clean break with the past, beginning his account with the death of Charles Martel and the succession of his sons, Pippin III and Carloman in 741.<sup>249</sup> As we shall see, though, even this author had to deal with the problem of the last Merovingian.

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<sup>244</sup> *Continuationes*, 1-10.

<sup>245</sup> *Historia Daretis Frigii de Origine Francorum*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM*, 2.

<sup>246</sup> On the modern defences and criticisms of the Trojan origin story, see G. Huppert, 'The Trojan Franks and their Critics', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 12 (1965), 227-41. See also E.A.R. Brown, 'The Trojan Origins of the French and the Brothers Jean du Tillet', in A.C. Murray (ed.), *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History* (Toronto, 1998), pp. 348-84.

<sup>247</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 688-721.

<sup>248</sup> *Vita Karoli*, 1.

<sup>249</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 741.

Looking further highlights important differences in the approaches of these Carolingian authors. Perhaps most obviously, the Frankish sub-groups have all but disappeared in these accounts; there are very few references to Austrasians, Neustrians and Burgundians, especially after the death of Charles Martel. Instead, we primarily hear only of the Franks, unqualified by more specific terms. This is not the same usage of *Franci* as found in *LHF*, with the term being used for a particular sub-group: it applies to all the Franks. Likewise, we hear very little of the internal politics of the Frankish heartland, with accounts instead focussing primarily on wars against peripheral peoples – wars waged by the Franks as a whole.

What we have here, then, is an emphasis on Frankish unity to a far greater extreme than the desire for consensus found in the Merovingian texts. Rather than highlighting the interplay between the three Frankish kingdoms, the early Carolingian authors present the Franks as a single entity, and so the Neustrians, Austrasians and Burgundians fall almost completely out of sight, except where the authors borrowed from *LHF* as did Fredegar's continuator and the *AMP*-author: indeed, the latter – showing a clear understanding of the late Merovingian author's usage – replaced *LHF*'s *Franci* with 'Neustrian Franks'.<sup>250</sup> The old *Teilreiche* remained important as geographical features of the *regnum Francorum*, but now their inhabitants were all simply – and equally – *Franci*. Where Merovingian authors idealised a situation in which there was consensus within the Frankish community and between the sub-groups and *Teilreiche*, Carolingian authors overlooked these divisions in order to show the Franks completely united under the new dynasty.

At the same time, the respective roles of the Franks and their rulers are presented somewhat differently in the Carolingian texts than they had been in those of the Merovingian period. Both Fredegar and the *LHF*-author wrote history centred on the Franks as a collective and active group, with the Merovingians simply being among the more important members of the community. The later historical narratives, though, are above all about the individual members of the Carolingian dynasty. Fredegar's continuator has Charles Martel take up undisputed leadership of the community after the end of the civil war narrated by the *LHF*-author, and he

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<sup>250</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 688, 714.

proceeds to lead the Franks against their enemies on the peripheries.<sup>251</sup> He passes this role onto his sons Carloman and Pippin,<sup>252</sup> and the latter is eventually made king.<sup>253</sup> The account ends with Pippin in turn passing the role of leadership onto his own sons Charlemagne and Carloman.<sup>254</sup> The authors of the annals provide similar narratives concentrating above all on the leadership provided by the Carolingians, continuing the story into Charlemagne's reign. The Franks still feature heavily in these narratives, of course, but primarily as the followers of the Carolingian rulers, who take centre-stage.

Like earlier historians, though, the Carolingian authors still saw cooperation between ruler and Franks as a virtue. Thus, there are many examples of Pippin and Charlemagne holding assemblies with their people before deciding courses of action, whether in war or other matters. Perhaps the most important symbol of this counsel between Franks and rulers was the annual gathering and mustering of the Frankish army referred to as either the Marchfield (in the Merovingian period) or Mayfield (in the Carolingian period). There has been some debate among modern scholars as to the precise meaning and significance of these gatherings. Gregory of Tours makes only one reference to the Marchfield in his story of Clovis and the vase of Soissons.<sup>255</sup> Fredegar and the *LHF*-author both followed Gregory in reporting this story, with the latter repeating Gregory's account almost word for word,<sup>256</sup> while the former altered Gregory's wording somewhat to have events take place on the Kalends of March (*Kalendas Marcias*) rather the Field of March (*campus martius*).<sup>257</sup> Nevertheless, it remains the case Gregory's was the only original reference to the Marchfield in the Merovingian sources.

Besides this there are only two hints at March having some sort of significance. First, all of Childebert II's charters are all dated to 1 March, although this does not necessarily relate to a military mustering.<sup>258</sup> Second, the *LHF*-author refers to one of Charles Martel's campaigns as taking place in March,<sup>259</sup> although this is one of many military campaigns that can either be dated to other months

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<sup>251</sup> *Continuationes*, 10 ff.

<sup>252</sup> *Continuationes*, 23-4.

<sup>253</sup> *Continuationes*, 33.

<sup>254</sup> *Continuationes*, 53-4.

<sup>255</sup> *DLH*, ii.27.

<sup>256</sup> *LHF*, 10.

<sup>257</sup> Fredegar, iii.16.

<sup>258</sup> *Decretio Childeberti*, ed. E.A. Eckhart, *Pactus legis Salicae*, *MGH LL nat. Germ.* 4, 1, pp. 267-9.

<sup>259</sup> *LHF*, 53.

(definitely or speculatively) or not securely dated at all, so it should not be taken as representative.<sup>260</sup> There is, then, a not insignificant dearth of evidence for this practice in the Merovingian period.<sup>261</sup> Conversely, there is somewhat more evidence for the importance of the Easter Court to Merovingian political processes.<sup>262</sup>

Whatever the reality of the Marchfield in the Merovingian period, though, it seems the Carolingians wished to make it their own. Fredegar's continuator certainly believed in the reality of the Marchfield. He tells us in 754: 'King Pippin ordered all the Franks to come to him at the royal villa of Berny-Rivière on the Kalends of March, as is the custom of the Franks. And he formed a plan with his nobles.'<sup>263</sup> Then: 'in the tenth year of his reign, Pippin ordered all the Frankish nobles to come to him for a Mayfield at Düren in the region of Ripuarria to discuss the well-being of the kingdom and the advantage of the Franks in traditional assembly.'<sup>264</sup> Several chapters later we learn: Pippin 'summoned the whole army of the Franks and the many peoples who inhabited his kingdom to Orleans to come to his Mayfield assembly, which he first instituted for the Marchfield for the advantage of the Franks.'<sup>265</sup> The continuator also states Mayfields were held in 763 and 767.<sup>266</sup> From these references we can guess Pippin first replaced the Marchfield with a Mayfield in 761, 'the tenth year of his reign'.

In this context, two passages from Fredegar's *Chronicle* referring to Burgundian matters are worth mentioning. According to the first: 'In the month of May in the seventeenth year of his reign [612], Theuderic assembled at Langres an army from all the regions of his kingdom.'<sup>267</sup> In the second we learn: 'Flaochad instituted an assembly in the month of May, gathering to him the bishops and leaders of the Burgundian kingdom at Chalons to discuss the advantage of the

<sup>260</sup> See B.S. Bachrach, 'Was the Marchfield Part of the Frankish Constitution?', in B.S. Bachrach (ed.), *Armies and Politics in the Early Medieval West* (Ashgate, 1993), pp. 178-85, at pp. 181-2.

<sup>261</sup> I.N. Wood, 'The Germanic Successor States', in P.F. Bang and W. Scheidel, *The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 498-517, at p. 509.

<sup>262</sup> For example, *Passio Praejecti*, 24. See Wood, 'World of Late Antiquity'.

<sup>263</sup> *Continuationes*, 37: 'euoluto anno, praefatus rex ad K. Mar. omnes Francos, sicut mos Francorum est, Bernaco uilla publica ad se venire praecepit. Initoque consilio cum proceribus suis.'

<sup>264</sup> *Continuationes*, 42: 'Euoluto anno, id est anno decimo regni ipsius, omnes optimates Francorum ad Dura in pago Riguerinse ad campo Madio pro salute patrie et utilitatem Francorum tractandum placito instituto ad se uenire praecepit.'

<sup>265</sup> *Continuationes*, 48: 'Euoluto igitur anno commoto omni exercito Francorum uel plurimum nationum quod in regno suo commorabantur, usque ad Aurilianis ueniens ibi placitum suum campo Madio, quod ipse primus pro campo Martio pro utilitate Francorum instituit.'

<sup>266</sup> *Continuationes*, 47, 49.

<sup>267</sup> Fredegar, iv.38: 'Anno XVII regni sui Lingonas de uniuersas regni sui prouincias mense Madio exercitus adunantur.'

kingdom.’<sup>268</sup> As with the Merovingian mentions of gatherings in March, these are not much to go on, but they suggest a tradition of annual assembly that either was not fixed in March or whose timing varied by region. This implies Pippin’s ‘innovation’ of moving the Marchfield assembly to May was not as much of a novelty as Fredegar’s continuator wished it to appear. Nevertheless, if there were varied traditions for the assembling of the nobility, we can imagine a ruler in Pippin’s situation would have wished to regulate them. Thus, perhaps, he rolled the concepts of the Marchfield, the Mayfield, the Easter Courts and the *iudicium Francorum* into a single assembly.

Neither *ARF* nor *AMP* mention the Mayfield or even hint at Pippin’s innovation, but some of the so-called minor annals refer to various Mayfields held in the 770s, specifically at Geneva in 773, at Düren in 775 and 779, at Worms in 776 and at Paderborn in 777.<sup>269</sup> It seems impossible to say what significance, if any, these assemblies being Mayfields had, but they alert to us to the possibility other such assemblies in both the Carolingian and Merovingian periods were Mayfields or Marchfields without any sources necessarily recording this. Alternatively, it may be the 760s and 770s saw Pippin and Charlemagne attempt to consolidate Carolingian rule by co-opting a notional Frankish custom in order to tap into a sense of continuity with the shared Frankish past.

In the early Carolingian texts we can see the emergence of a somewhat re-imagined conception of the Frankish community, even if this was based in late Merovingian tradition and conception. But in addition to the re-imagining of the Franks, we also find in these texts a far more explicit emphasis on Christianity than in the late Merovingian sources. Of course, Christianity had been an important part of Frankish culture since Clovis I’s conversion, which Gregory of Tours, Fredegar and the *LHF*-author all saw as an important moment in Frankish history. We should certainly not understate the importance of Christianity to late Merovingian authors.<sup>270</sup> As we have already seen, the *LHF*-author believed the war that followed Pippin II’s death was

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<sup>268</sup> Fredegar, iv.90: ‘*Flaochadus collectis secum pontefecis et ducibus de regnum Burgundiae Cabilonno pro utilitate patriae tractandum minse Madio placitum instituit.*’

<sup>269</sup> *Annales Alamannici*, ed. G. Pertz, *MGH SS 1* (Hanover, 1826), s.a. 773-9; *Annales Guelferbytani*, ed. G. Pertz, *MGH SS 1* (Hanover, 1826), s.a. 773-9; *Annales Nazariani*, ed. G. Pertz, *MGH SS 1* (Hanover, 1826); *Annales Laureshamenses*, ed. G. Pertz, *MGH SS 1* (Hanover, 1826), s.a. 777.

<sup>270</sup> See Dörler, ‘*Liber Historiae Francorum*’.



instigated by the Devil, and Charles Martel escaped imprisonment with God's help;<sup>271</sup> he also criticised Clovis II for desecrating the relics of St Denis,<sup>272</sup> consistently referred to the Frisian *dux* Radbod as a pagan,<sup>273</sup> and seems to have had the Biblical establishment of the kings of Israel in mind when narrating the establishment of the kings of the Franks.<sup>274</sup> Finally, when the Carolingians assembled their nobility they did so in 'secular' Mayfields, rather than the more overtly religious Easter Courts of the Merovingians.

Carolingian authors, though, were much more explicit in identifying Christianity as one of the key traits of their community. Charles Martel and his descendants marched to war by the will of God and triumphed over their peripheral enemies with the help of the Lord; as well as fighting paganism, they also aided the Papacy in its struggles against the Lombards and held church councils to regulate the Christianity of their subjects. This emphasis on Christianity went hand-in-hand with the emphasis on Frankish unity, and the two served to demonstrate the Franks were now the heart of a wider Christian community united under the Carolingians. This community was in many ways still Frankish, but Frankishness was no longer seen as its most important feature. The wars undertaken by the Carolingians were expansionist and aimed at the conquest of peripheral peoples, so it made sense to overlook Frankishness in favour of a less exclusive characteristic like shared Christianity, especially when the 'enemies' of the community – that is, those excluded from a place within it – were often associated with paganism.

The community of the *regnum Francorum* continued to be ruled by Franks, its army was still the *exercitus Francorum* led by *reges Francorum* and the Franks were still at the heart of historical narratives written about it, but membership of the community was no longer contingent on identifying as a Frank. Instead, continued existence of the community relied upon its members swearing loyalty to the Carolingian dynasty and accepting the vision of community being promulgated by the Carolingian court, with its increasing emphasis on orthodox Christianity. We shall examine these aspects of the Carolingian community by considering the place of peripheral peoples further in the following chapter. Now, though, we shall turn to

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<sup>271</sup> *LHF*, 51.

<sup>272</sup> *LHF*, 44.

<sup>273</sup> *LHF*, 49-51.

<sup>274</sup> *LHF*, 4.

the most notorious way in which Carolingian authors re-imagined the Frankish community: their treatment of the Merovingians.

#### 1.4.1 Negotiating the Merovingians

Just as in the Merovingian period, shared rulership was one of the most important features of the community imagined by early Carolingian authors. But the Carolingians practiced a much more overtly military style of kingship than had become the norm in the late Merovingian period. In order to explain this apparent incongruity, authors writing under the Carolingians built up a model for the correct style of rule not just by glorifying their current rulers, but by simultaneously contrasting them with their Merovingian predecessors. This contrast ultimately rested on the idea the later Merovingians had been useless kings who needed to be replaced for the good of the community, while the Carolingians were strong rulers more in the model of earlier kings like Clovis I and Chlothar II.

Such an approach also allowed these authors to overcome the problem of Pippin III's usurpation without presenting him as a usurper. By ignoring the later Merovingians,<sup>275</sup> or by portraying them as useless and idle,<sup>276</sup> doing nothing but acting as political figureheads,<sup>277</sup> authors excluded these kings from having had any positive role in the course of Frankish history: at best they were non-kings and at worst their inactivity had caused divisions and trauma in the Frankish kingdom which had taken the Carolingians a century to resolve. This necessarily created a critique not just of the later Merovingians themselves, but of the late Merovingian community, and these authors trod a fine line between creating a *damnatio memoriae* for the Merovingians and simply writing off an entire period of Frankish history; the ultimate solution to this was to make the Merovingians the scapegoats for everything imagined to have been wrong with society in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. These authors did not create the *topos* of *rois fainéants*, but they placed it firmly within the Western European political consciousness, to be taken to far greater extremes in later centuries.<sup>278</sup> It is also important to remember a coherent attitude with regard the Merovingians did not suddenly come into existence

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<sup>275</sup> *Continuationes*, 11-33.

<sup>276</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 688-93.

<sup>277</sup> *Vita Karoli*, 1.

<sup>278</sup> For an overview, see E. Peters, *The Shadow King: Rex Inutilis in Medieval Law and Literature, 751-1327* (New Haven, 1970).

with Pippin III's usurpation, and each author had his or her own way of dealing with the Merovingian past; it is these differences which shall concern us now.

Fredegar's continuator largely followed the narrative of *LHF* in the opening chapters of his account, but there are some notable alterations. For example, Childebert III, whom the *LHF*-author had praised, is passed over almost in silence by the continuator, who notes his accession and death with no words of praise.<sup>279</sup> Nevertheless, he saw no need to repeat the *LHF*-author's rabid denunciation of Clovis II as the desecrator of St Denis and bringer of ruin to the kingdom during his later years, instead simply saying Clovis became insane,<sup>280</sup> although we might see this as a downplaying of the importance of the Merovingians, since the king's insanity seemingly had no impact on the well-being of the community.

Such downplaying becomes more obvious in the original section of the continuator's narrative, where no mention is made of the Merovingians. Theuderic's accession – as narrated by the *LHF*-author – is the last we hear of him, with not even a notice of his death, while Childeric III is completely absent, even at the moment of Pippin III's accession. This can be seen as an attempt to write off the Merovingians while keeping with the author's desire to stress continuity with the past. There was no need to actively denigrate the later Merovingians, but ignoring the last two meant Pippin III's election could be presented without the obstacle of a reigning king. We shall see in the next chapter that overlooking troublesome figures in Frankish history was a historiographical tactic the continuator was perfectly willing to use: he also largely ignored Pippin and Carloman's half-brother Grifo, who ended up at war with his brothers after their father's death.

By beginning his account in 741, the *ARF*-author largely avoided the late Merovingians: he only had to deal with Childeric III. Like Fredegar's continuator, he neglected to mention Childeric's accession in 743, which is only known from charter evidence.<sup>281</sup> His deposition, though, is used to explain why Pippin was made king. The author writes: 'Following the custom of the Franks, Pippin was elected as king... Truly Childeric, who falsely was called king, was tonsured and sent into a

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<sup>279</sup> Compare *LHF*, 49-50: '*Childebertus, frater eius, vir inclytus in regno statutus est... Tunc enim bonae memoriae gloriosus dominus Childebertus rex iustus migravit ad Dominum*'; *Continuationes*, 6-7: '*Childebertus frater eius in regnum resedit... Mortuus est autem his diebus Childebertus rex.*'

<sup>280</sup> Compare *LHF*, 44 to *Continuationes*, 1.

<sup>281</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 290.

monastery.<sup>282</sup> So here we have Childeric denounced as a false king; as we shall see, his falseness was linked to a lack of power.

The *AMP*-author, who presents the most anachronistic picture of the late Merovingian world,<sup>283</sup> gives us a radical and explicit re-imagining of the recent past and the place of the Merovingians within Frankish history. The author explains when Pippin II took up leadership of the Austrasians, the Suevi, Saxons and Bavarians ‘were struggling to defend their own unique freedoms’ due to ‘the idleness of kings’ and the civil wars which had divided the kingdom.<sup>284</sup> Later, the author explains Pippin fought wars against an extensive list of peoples who ‘formerly were subjected to the Franks’.<sup>285</sup> In both cases the author blames civil wars and the fracturing of Frankish hegemony on the weakness of the kings, who are presented as a sorry bunch. Theuderic III appoints mayors and leads his army at the Battle of Tertry, but he is ultimately subject to the whims of the nobility, and becomes nothing but a figurehead for the order established by Pippin.<sup>286</sup> Unlike in *LHF*, it is Pippin, not the Franks, who appoints Theuderic’s successors, allowing them to keep the royal title because of his loyalty. Here, Dagobert’s death seems purely incidental to the civil war that followed Pippin’s death, and the Franks simply make Chilperic II king with no mention of his dubious credentials. In a further reversal of the *LHF*-author’s outlook, Chilperic’s appointment by the Franks rather than by Pippin may count against his legitimacy here. Yet Chilperic is also the last Merovingian to feature in *AMP*; there is no mention of Charles Martel’s short-lived puppet-king Chlothar IV, but more importantly the accession of Theuderic, so crucial to the *LHF*-author, is completely ignored, and after Chilperic’s death Charles seems to rule alone – king in all but name. Likewise, there is no mention of Childeric III, either at his accession or deposition, supporting the idea it was better simply to have the Merovingians fade from the picture and have Pippin III become king unopposed.

Finally we come to Einhard’s *Life of Charlemagne*, which opens with an outlandish portrayal of Childeric III as a long-haired, long-bearded king who was transported to-and-fro in an ox cart to act as nothing more than a symbol of authority

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<sup>282</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 750. On monastic ‘retirement’ see Goosmann, ‘Politics and Penance’.

<sup>283</sup> *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 340-9.

<sup>284</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 688.

<sup>285</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 691.

<sup>286</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 688-90.

through which the mayors could rule.<sup>287</sup> Unlike earlier authors, who largely or completely ignored Childeric, Einhard focussed on this king specifically in order to target not just the supposed inactivity of the later Merovingians, but also their allegedly degenerate and out-dated customs and practices. Childeric is portrayed as ‘content with the royal title, excessive hair and long beard’, has nothing except ‘the useless name of king’ and a small estate presented to him by the mayor, and only appears to rule but leaves the actual running of the kingdom to the mayor. This is Einhard’s version of Childeric, but he is clearly meant to stand for all the later Merovingians:

The Merovingian dynasty, from which the Franks had been in the habit of creating kings for themselves, is believed to last all the way to King Childeric, who was put aside, tonsured and driven into a monastery by the order of Pope Stephen of Rome. But, although it could be seen to have ended at that time, it was already of no vigour for some time, nor was anything illustrious displayed in it besides the empty name of king.<sup>288</sup>

In this, the very first paragraph of his text, Einhard seamlessly segues between Childeric and the Merovingian dynasty as a whole, implying the description we read of the former could apply to any later Merovingian.

Besides the idleness, two other features of Childeric are attacked by Einhard: his long hair and beard and the ox-cart used to transport him from place to place. The idea long hair was a key characteristic of the Merovingians was certainly not created by Einhard and is present in many sources from the Merovingian period. No source, however, explains the significance of the long hair, and its role in Merovingian kingship has been debated since Einhard’s description of Childeric.<sup>289</sup> Various explanations have been offered by modern scholars: a symbol of sacral kingship;<sup>290</sup> a secular but no less important marker of political superiority over subjects;<sup>291</sup> or perhaps a sign of Biblical virility in model of Samson.<sup>292</sup> The ox-cart – less discussed both by contemporaries of the Merovingians and later scholars – appears to have been a part of the late Roman administration which survived into

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<sup>287</sup> *Vita Karoli*, 1.

<sup>288</sup> *Vita Karoli*, 1: ‘*Gens Meroingorum, de qua Franci reges sibi creare soliti erant, usque in Hildricum regem, qui iussu Stephani Romani pontificis depositus ac detonsus atque in monasterium trusus est, durasse putatur. Quae licet in illo finita possit videri, tamen iam dudum nullius vigoris erat, nec quicquam in se clarum praeter inane regis vocabulum praeferebat.*’

<sup>289</sup> P.E. Dutton, *Charlemagne’s Mustache and Other Cultural Clusters of a Dark Age* (New York and Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 3-42.

<sup>290</sup> Le Jan, ‘Die Sakralität’.

<sup>291</sup> Diesenberger, ‘Hair’.

<sup>292</sup> Goosmann, ‘Long-haired kings’.

Merovingian Francia.<sup>293</sup> Given the Carolingian interest in Roman precedents, it seems Einhard meant to turn this perfectly legitimate sign of political power – like the long hair – into an object of ridicule.

Einhard's portrayal of Childeric as a ridiculous figure may well have had some basis in reality, but the point was not to represent the real Childeric, it was to present a king who was everything a good Carolingian ruler was not. Nonetheless, this was not just how Einhard and his contemporaries pictured one king; it was how they imagined an entire series of kings, even an entire period of Frankish history, with Childeric now providing the embodiment of all that was wrong with that period. In the next chapter we will see how Carolingian authors used rebellious peripheral leaders to blame rebellion on a single individual rather than a whole people to more easily facilitate the integration of peripheral peoples. Here, Childeric was being used in a similar way by Einhard to lay the problems of the recent Frankish past specifically on this king, meaning the Franks were not blamed for the supposed degeneracy of the late-seventh and early-eighth centuries. A similar approach had been taken by the *AMP*-author, although in that case the problems were blamed on the Merovingians as a group, rather than laying the entire burden on a single figure as Einhard did. In the *Life of Charlemagne*, then, Childeric's deposition is a redemptive act; by deposing this ridiculous sham-king Pippin is not acting unlawfully but is removing the final obstacle to the recovery of the Frankish community and its return to former glory.

Whether or not they mention Childeric III, each of these authors relied on a further tool to justify Pippin's accession, one which also reinforced the more explicitly Christian nature of the community under the Carolingians: papal support. Fredegar's continuator explains Pippin was made king 'with the counsel and consent of all the Franks' after 'sending a motion to the Apostolic See and receiving its authority'.<sup>294</sup> The *AMP*-author explains Pope Zacharias had been consulted before Pippin's elevation.<sup>295</sup> The *ARF*-author provides the version which has become most famous. In his entry for 749, the author outlines the now well-known question posed

<sup>293</sup> J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Review of A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964)', *English Historical Review*, 80 (1965), 785-790. 789; Murray, 'Post vocantur Merovingii: Fredegar, Merovech, and 'Sacral Kingship'', in A.C. Murray (ed.), *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History* (Toronto, 1998), pp. 121-53, at pp. 130-2.

<sup>294</sup> *Continuationes*, 33: 'Quo tempore una cum consilio et consensu omnium Francorum missa relatione ad sede apostolica auctoritate praecepta praecelsus Pippinus electione totius Francorum... sublimatur in regno.'

<sup>295</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 750.

to Zacharias by Pippin ‘regarding the kings in Francia, who did not have any royal power at that time, whether this was good or not’. Predictably, ‘Pope Zacharias commanded Pippin that it would be better to name king him who had the power than for he without power to continue’.<sup>296</sup> Accordingly, Pippin was made king.<sup>297</sup> As we have already seen, Einhard named Pope Stephen as the one who gave the order,<sup>298</sup> perhaps mistaking the usurpation with Stephen’s visit to Francia and re-consecration of Pippin.<sup>299</sup> In any case, the papal involvement was the important point. We have little information about ecclesiastical involvement in the raising of Merovingian kings, but from the start Carolingian kingship was to be divinely ordained, and with it the deposition of the last member of the old dynasty.

As we shall see in the next chapter, when it came to discussing potentially troublesome or divisive figures, Carolingian authors became more confident as the dynasty became better established. This certainly seems to apply to the later Merovingians. In the earliest Carolingian source, the *Continuations*, they appear more as non-entities – ‘shadow kings’ – than as figures to be actively accused of bad kingship, and they simply fade into irrelevance. In *ARF*, Childeric is generally overlooked, but he is brought out of the shadows for his deposition, when he is accused of being a useless king. While *AMP* followed the *Continuations* in allowing the Merovingians to fade into irrelevance, they also have a much more general denigration of the dynasty’s later members before this fading takes place. Of all these authors it is Einhard who truly gives the Merovingians centre stage, but this is only so he can set them up for their ultimate denunciation; he parades Childeric only to prove the dynasty’s unworthiness to rule. Ultimately, what we see from *AMP*’s general denigration combined with Einhard’s specific denunciation is as the Carolingians became more powerful, so their historians showed a greater willingness to deal with the Merovingian problem.

That the most explicit criticisms of the previous dynasty come from the period after Charlemagne’s imperial coronation should not be overlooked. Not only

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<sup>296</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 749: ‘de regibus in Francia, qui illis temporibus non habentes regale potestatem, si bene fuisset an non. Et Zacharias papa mandavit Pippino, ut melius esset illum regem vocari, qui potestatem haberet, quam illum, qui sine regali potestate manebat.’

<sup>297</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 749-50.

<sup>298</sup> *Vita Karoli*, 1.

<sup>299</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 753-4.

did authors see a continuing need to address this problem; after 800 they could do so because Charlemagne's actions had proved the ultimate legitimation of his father's usurpation. Charlemagne had also brought the contrast between Merovingian and Carolingian styles of rule into contrast more sharply than ever before, which meant authors who had grown up during the reigns of Pippin and Charlemagne judged the Merovingians by the standards of royal power with which they were familiar; standards which emphasised strong military rule and expansionist warfare, activities the later Merovingians had not undertaken. Here, then, we can see the emergence of the idea the later Merovingians had not lived up to the correct standards of kingship, or more accurately the Carolingian expectation of kingship as embodied by Charlemagne, and it seems sensible to conclude this was an expectation shared by Einhard, the *AMP*-author and their audiences.

We should not overstate this denigration, however. Throughout the preceding discussion we have seen it was only the later members of the dynasty who were denounced. Carolingian audiences maintained a positive picture of certain Merovingians by continuing to read older sources, even if some of these circulated in altered forms.<sup>300</sup> Even as early as the 760s, the earlier Merovingians were being used as the standard against which the new regime would be measured: Clovis's Catholicism became the template for the explicitly Christian style of rule employed by the Carolingians.<sup>301</sup> The early Merovingians were also judged as the standard for Carolingian rule of non-Franks, as shown in a reference by Fredegar's continuator to Pippin III's ability to return the Saxons to the tribute which they had paid to Chlothar I, from which they had been excused by Dagobert I.<sup>302</sup> Some genealogists of the Carolingian dynasty went even further, claiming the family was descended from a daughter of Chlothar II,<sup>303</sup> an idea which linked them to a traditionally strong and highly-praised king, offered them a notional legitimacy they otherwise lacked and conveniently bypassing the later, 'useless' members of the Merovingian line.<sup>304</sup> Such ties between the two dynasties were further enforced by Charlemagne's decision to name two of his sons Louis (Clovis) and Lothar (Chlothar), which

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<sup>300</sup> Reimitz, 'Providential past'.

<sup>301</sup> Innes, 'Immune from heresy', pp. 101-4.

<sup>302</sup> *Continuationes*, 31. *DLH*, iv.14; Fredegar, iv.74.

<sup>303</sup> *Genealogia Karolorum*, ed. G. Waitz, *MGH SS*, 13 (Hanover, 1871), 1-2, 4. The chronology does not necessarily make sense, but authors may have confused the first two Chlothars.

<sup>304</sup> See Wood, 'Genealogy', pp. 234-5.



became dynastic names for the Carolingians alongside Charles, Pippin and Carloman.<sup>305</sup>

## 1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we have attempted to demonstrate the stability of certain ideas about the Franks and the Frankish community from the mid-seventh to the early ninth century, while also highlighting the different approaches used by authors who chose to write about Frankish history. The very idea of writing history from a Frankish perspective seems only to have come into its own in seventh century. We might even trace this to the re-unification of the *regnum Francorum* under Chlothar II: this new unity could easily have brought with it a new impetus for stressing Frankish communal identity, because the members of the three *Teilreiche* had come together in support of Chlothar. As we can see from the earliest evidence for the denunciation of Chlothar's rival Brunhild, this also provided a way to glorify the new regime and demonise those who could now be blamed for standing in the way of Frankish unity. The historical accounts of Fredegar and the *LHF*-author together with the *Lives* of Leudegar and Balthild particularly show how this ideal of unity remained an important discursive tool for the remainder of the Merovingian period. Such a vision of Frankish unity was important to both the long-term and short-term history of the Franks: that there existed in the late Merovingian period a singular, unified *gens Francorum* with a long history stretching back to antiquity and the Trojan War was not in doubt.

Yet these authors were confronted with a present in which the *gens* was divided, albeit geographically rather than ethnically, and these divisions dominated the political life of the *regnum*, threatening it with intermittent civil war. For the *LHF*-author, these divisions even meant only one group – the nobility of Neustria-Burgundy – could truly be considered Franks, with all the cultural heritage that meant; the Austrasian were just a type of Frank. If anything, though, these divisions made the ideal of unity even more important. All inhabitants of the Frankish *Teilreiche* – whether Austrasian, Burgundian or Neustrian – were Franks and were part of a community which was at its strongest when united. Fredegar actually

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<sup>305</sup> J. Jarnut, 'Chlodwig und Chlothar: Anmerkungen zu den Namen zweier Söhne Karls des Grossen', *Francia*, 12 (1984), 645-51.

shows us such unity was possible even with more than one king ruling the Franks, as during the joint-reigns of Chlothar and Dagobert, Dagobert and Sigibert, and Sigibert and Clovis; although these periods were not completely free from turbulence, the kings and nobles were largely able to negotiate their problems and restore consensus. We should see the late Merovingian period as dominated not by civil wars, then, but by ongoing negotiations about how the unity of the *regnum* could best be achieved.

The change from the Merovingian to the Carolingian dynasty did nothing to dampen the emphasis on Frankish unity. Indeed, while the idea of the community of the *regnum Francorum* changed during the eighth century, the Franks were still at the heart of that community, and Carolingian authors tended to overlook the divisions that had been so important to their predecessors. The point of negotiation for these authors was rather with the legacy of the Merovingians. We will never know the precise circumstances surrounding Pippin's royal usurpation, but we can see later authors remembered it as a necessary act for the stability of the community, to rid it of the rulers who – by Carolingian standards – were kings in name only. The deposition of Childeric III, then, was undertaken for the good of the community and in this sense was no different from other violent royal depositions. This redemptive act may have been important for the stability of the community, but more important for the way in which the community was perceived were the policies of the Carolingians towards the non-Frankish peoples on the peripheries of the Frankish heartland. Let us now turn to these peoples and their significance to the community of the *regnum Francorum*.

## Chapter 2

### Developing a Discourse of Otherness

#### 2.1 Franks and non-Franks in the seventh and eighth centuries

As we have now seen, the seventh and eighth centuries witnessed the emergence of Frankish identity in the written sources, which in turn instigated debate and discussion about the nature of the Franks, their kingdoms and their community. However, we have thus far neglected what was, for both contemporaries and modern scholars, a key feature of the Frankish world: the Franks' rule over non-Frankish peoples living on the peripheries of the Frankish heartland.<sup>1</sup> In fact, just as there was an imagined Frankish community, so there was an imagined community of the *regnum Francorum* which incorporated other peoples. Admittedly, the members of this wider community were not members of the same ethnic group and did not share a notional communal origin. But they shared the other feature of an imagined community, particularly a shared history of interactions and shared rulers in the Merovingian kings. For the authors of Frankish history, then, the interactions between Franks and non-Franks were among the most important features of Frankish society. As we shall now see, though, the nature of this wider community was open to even more debate and negotiation than those that took place over membership of the Frankish community, especially during the Carolingian period, when shared rulers and religious beliefs became arguably the most important common features of the community's members.

While wars against non-Franks feature heavily in sources from across the Merovingian and Carolingian period, there is a noticeable change in the way they were discussed from the middle of the eighth century onwards. Whereas Merovingian kings seem to have primarily been concerned with extracting booty, tribute and promises of military aid from the peripheral peoples, the Carolingians – especially Charlemagne – were attempting to bring these peoples more firmly under Frankish rule and to establish permanent ties of loyalty between Frankish royal power and the peripheries. Despite this difference in objectives, the Carolingians often summoned up the idea these peoples were already subject to Frankish rule,

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<sup>1</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 159-80, 280-321.

building on an imagined common past, albeit one which favoured the Franks. Thus, peoples who refused to acknowledge Carolingian sovereignty were held up as rebels, the clearest example of which came with the presentation of the Saxons, who became the epitome of an inherently rebellious people. The concepts of disloyalty and rebellion were a useful reflection of those who were steadfastly loyal to their Carolingian rulers, and so confirmed their places in the community; the epitome here was the Franks themselves, the heart of the community.<sup>2</sup> Such traits were also pinned on individuals who supposedly led their peoples astray, and in this way Carolingian authors could promote a sense of ‘otherness’ without causing the intended targets of integration from being permanently excluded from the community.

The Carolingians were also far more concerned with the religion of their peripheral subjects than the Merovingians had been. The various peoples of the former Roman provinces of Gaul that the Franks ruled had long been Christian, but the situation east of the Rhine is harder to gauge.<sup>3</sup> The Saxons and Frisians were pagan, and there remained unconverted elements into the ninth century, but the Bavarians were Christian, and it is difficult to imagine peoples living along the former Roman border such as the Alamanni, Hessians and Thuringians had not been exposed to some form of Christianisation, whether by the Romans themselves or by the Franks.<sup>4</sup> But there is little evidence of missionary or Christianising tendencies in the Merovingian sources, with a few notable exceptions like *Vita Columbani* and *Vita Amandi*.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the Franks of the Merovingian period do not seem to have been concerned about the paganism of some of the peoples who owed loyalty to them, nor did they display the need to ‘correct’ the Christianity practiced by those who had converted. These were almost entirely Carolingian preoccupations and there was a strong emphasis on the need not just to convert pagans to Christianity, but to ensure the subjects of the Carolingians practiced the correct form of Christianity. It is for this reason we find many instances of peripheral peoples

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<sup>2</sup> On loyalty to the Carolingians as a crucial aspect of Frankish identity in the Carolingian period, see R. McKitterick, ‘Political Ideology in Carolingian Historiography’, in Y. Hen and M. Innes (eds.), *Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 162-74; Reimitz, ‘*Omnes Franci*’, p. 54. See also, H. Reimitz, ‘Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitungen im karolingischen Mitteleuropa’, in W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (eds), *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter* (Vienna, 2000), pp. 140-8.

<sup>3</sup> Wood, ‘Pagan Religions’.

<sup>4</sup> On the Thuringians and Bavarians, see I.N. Wood, ‘Religion in Pre-Carolingian Thuringia and Bavaria’, in J. Fries-Knoblach and H. Steuer with J. Hines (eds), *The Baiuvarii and Thuringi: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 317-29.

<sup>5</sup> *Vita Amandi I*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM*, 5 (Hanover, 1910).

being labelled pagans or heretics along with statements about the peoples in question being converted – and baptised – or corrected: this was all part of the Carolingian technique for integrating non-Franks into the community.

Yet it was not enough to simply label peoples as pagans or heretics; the beliefs that marked them out as such could also be specified. Such descriptions or definitions of ‘pagan’ beliefs can be found above all in documents associated with church councils or with governance, especially of Saxony, and they tend to display a curious mix of what we would consider paganism, superstition and syncretism, although eighth-century authors did not make such distinctions. Yet these definitions are rarely found in isolation, and often accompany similar definitions of what constituted correct behaviour for laity and clergy. What we will see, then, is defining paganism was actually another tool by which the Carolingians could define the traits of their imagined community.

The ‘discourse of otherness’ that emerged in the eighth century was ultimately a way for the Carolingians to negotiate their community. While rebels were undeniably ‘others’ for a community in which loyalty to the Carolingians and religious orthodoxy were prized traits, one could not be a rebel unless one had chosen to abandon one’s place in the community. Likewise, missionary efforts and forced baptisms had the goal of bringing pagans to Christianity and bringing them into the community, so pagans only remained ‘others’ if they did not accept conversion. So, what we are faced with in the early Carolingian period is a very situational notion of otherness, which, from the perspective of the Carolingians themselves, only lasted as long as the others ‘chose’ to remain excluded. But this ‘choice’ is exactly what made certain peripheral peoples others: rebels chose to abandon their loyalty to their (rightful) Carolingian rulers, excluding themselves from membership of the community in the process; the same may be said for pagans who continued in their misguided superstitions after missionaries (or kings) had attempted to show them the error of their ways.

It is also worth noting this ‘discourse of otherness’ was applied most harshly to those in closest proximity to the Frankish heartlands, so, for example, the Aquitanians are treated more harshly than the Muslims, even though the latter were not Christians, while the Saxons were treated more harshly than the Slavs, even though both peoples were pagan in the eighth century. Given what we have already

established about the early Carolingian discourse of otherness, such apparent inconsistencies actually make sense. After all, Aquitanians and Saxons were more clearly part of the *regnum Francorum* than Muslims or Slavs, at least from an imagined historical perspective based on Merovingian sources. It was these closest peoples who had resisted Carolingian rule or Christianity and had forfeited their place in the community; the theoretical place of more distant peoples within the community was more tenuous, if it existed at all, and so the need to brand such peoples as others was less urgent. What we shall see in the Carolingian sources is a nuanced or ambivalent attitude to those we might have expected to be denounced as harshly as were the Saxons or the rebellious leaders of Aquitaine. Despite having been one of the peoples which the Merovingians reduced to tributary status in the sixth century, the Lombards also occupied a more ambiguous position by the eighth century, and the Carolingians do not seem to have utilised the notion of rightful rule over them in the same way as other peoples, at least before Charlemagne's takeover of the kingdom in 774. Yet the Lombards were still part of the discourse of otherness because they could be shown to have broken agreements with the papacy and the Franks, so while the kings of the Franks made no claim to rule the Lombards, the latter could still be portrayed as treacherous.

In this chapter, we shall address these two categories which dominated the Carolingian perception of peripheral peoples. We will see the presentations of the wars of conquest in southern Gaul (particularly Aquitaine), Saxony and Lombard Italy were dominated by perceptions of the regions' inhabitants as treacherous, and we will consider the way authors used the relationship between a people and its leaders to assign blame for rebellion and limit the extent of exclusion, a tactic that worked in Aquitaine and Italy, but failed utterly in Saxony. In addition to these regional examples, we will also see how authors dealt with the issue of Franks who rebelled. This was particularly problematic for authors attempting to stress the unity of the *regnum Francorum* against rebellious others, and in fact in these cases authors utilised the concept of the rebellious peripheries to show Franks who rebelled should not be considered part of the community.

We will then go on to consider the depictions of paganism, particularly as seen through the eyes of the Anglo-Saxon missionaries who came to the continent in

increasing numbers in the eighth century. Above all, we will focus on Boniface, traditionally seen as the Anglo-Saxon missionary *par excellence*, who took an active role in determining the Carolingian definitions of paganism. But we will also show Boniface himself was initially something of an outsider whose place in the community was only firmly established after his death by the writing of *Vita Bonifatii*. This text epitomises the contribution of the Anglo-Saxons to Carolingian culture, and in it we will see one of the earliest specifically Carolingian presentations of the peripheral peoples as rebels and pagans who needed to be shown the error of their ways. For Willibald, the author of the *Life*, this was a discursive technique to confirm his subject's place in the community, and for us it is a clear sign of the attitudes that prevailed in the second half of the eighth century.

Yet while we can see these overriding trends in the Carolingian discourse of otherness, we must be careful not to overstate the cohesive nature of the discourse. In each source we can see an individual contribution, even if some sources borrowed from their predecessors, and in the presentation of each region we can see a different application of what can reasonably be described as a toolbox of themes and *topoi* on which authors could draw. Despite the overwhelming sense of otherness which emanates from these sources, there was no single Carolingian approach to the others. In order to contextualise the development of this discourse of otherness, though, and in order to fully realise its significance, we shall begin with the attitude Merovingian authors displayed towards the peripheral peoples.

## 2.2 Peripheral Peoples and Their Place in the Merovingian World

The reigns of Clovis I and his sons had been marked by wars of expansion into the former Roman provinces in Gaul and the regions east of the Rhine.<sup>6</sup> The results of these wars were consolidated under Clovis's grandsons, but the second half of the sixth century was also marked by intense periods of competition and civil war between the Frankish kings,<sup>7</sup> civil wars which culminated in the clashes between the brothers Theudebert II and Theuderic II and their cousin Chlothar II that we discussed in the previous chapter. Likewise, the first decades of the seventh century saw Chlothar II and Dagobert I officially 'release' some of the peripheral peoples –

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<sup>6</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 41-54.

<sup>7</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 88-101.

for example the Lombards and Saxons – from their oaths of loyalty or tribute to the Franks. Such developments do not need to be seen as symptoms of the period when so-called *rois fainéants* ruled the Franks, and there is little evidence to support the idea of a massive fracturing of Frankish hegemony, especially in Gaul, before the beginning of eighth century, suggesting the weakening of control over the peripheries may actually have been partly a result of the Pippinid rise to power at the centre.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, though, the Franks clearly did not exert the same influence over the peripheral peoples at the end of the seventh century as they did at the end of the sixth. After all, the *LHF*-author reports no information about interactions between Franks and non-Franks – whether peaceful or hostile – between the war of Chlothar and Dagobert against the Saxons and the wars fought by Pippin II at the end of the seventh century, and does not even mention Sigibert III's war against the Thuringians, which is only found in Fredegar's *Chronicle*.<sup>9</sup> In these sources, though, we can see the nascent idea Franks and non-Franks shared some kind of community, even if this was not as clearly imagined as was the purely Frankish community.

The narratives provided by Fredegar and the *LHF*-author describe many instances of the Franks marching to war against other peoples, but the reasons for these wars and the nature of the outcomes, as well as the nature of relations between Franks and non-Franks all tend to be rather vague, at least compared to what we will find in early Carolingian sources. For example, both authors followed Gregory in describing the Frankish involvement in Thuringia that led to the end of the Thuringian royal dynasty and the region's subjugation by the Franks, but none of these accounts give any particular justification for why the war took place: the Frankish kings simply decided to invade.<sup>10</sup> There are also occasions when, rather than being subjugated, peripheral peoples were made to pay tribute, which probably gives a better idea of exactly what it meant to be under Frankish rule in the sixth and seventh centuries. There are also several accounts that give no indication whatsoever of the outcome of such wars or the reasons they took occurred in the first place. Perhaps tellingly, though, there are some examples of wars which took place in

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<sup>8</sup> Geary, *Aristocracy*.

<sup>9</sup> Fredegar, iv.87.

<sup>10</sup> Fredegar, iii.32; *LHF*, 22. See *DLH*, iii.4.



reaction to rebellions by peripheral peoples, for example the Warni, Vascones and Thuringians in Fredegar's *Chronicle*,<sup>11</sup> and the Saxons in *LHF*.<sup>12</sup>

For Merovingian authors, though, these were isolated cases rather than a consistent way of portraying peripheral wars. But it is worth exploring the context surrounding Fredegar's Thuringian rebellion in more detail, because it actually tells us a great deal about how he perceived the relationship between Franks and non-Franks and the implications of this relationship for the community. What we will see is the peripheral peoples could be a threat to the stability of the *regnum Francorum*, and thus to the Frankish community, but as we saw in the previous chapter, individual Franks could also prove threats to stability, so this was not a criticism levelled solely at non-Franks.

On the accession of Chlothar II as sole king of the Franks in 613, Fredegar tells us among his many qualities he was able to keep the peace with the neighbouring peoples.<sup>13</sup> This not only represents an important part of Frankish kingship, it also sets the standard for what follows. When Chlothar's son Dagobert succeeded his father as king of the Franks, Fredegar claims he already inspired such fear east of the Rhine even those peoples living on the border of the Slavs and Avars wished to submit to his rule.<sup>14</sup> This reputation did not last, though. Dagobert's decision to move his court to Neustria coincided with the rising power of a Frankish merchant, Samo, who had recently been made king of the Slavs.<sup>15</sup> The remaining Austrasian chapters of the *Chronicle* narrate the collapse of Frankish authority east of the Rhine, beginning with increasing Slavic raids on Frankish merchants, which escalated to raids into Thuringia and the borders of Francia, and Samo's refusal to submit to Dagobert's authority.<sup>16</sup> Even if Fredegar's claims of Dagobert's descent into debauchery are over-statement,<sup>17</sup> the king's move west clearly weakened what had been a significant level of Frankish influence to the east.

Dagobert was, however, still able to call upon aid from the Alamannians and Lombards, although he had to negotiate with the Saxons, leading him to release

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<sup>11</sup> Fredegar, iv.15, iv.54, iv.78, iv.87.

<sup>12</sup> *LHF*, 27.

<sup>13</sup> Fredegar, iv.42.

<sup>14</sup> Fredegar, iv.58.

<sup>15</sup> Fredegar, iv.48, iv.59-60.

<sup>16</sup> Fredegar, iv.68.

<sup>17</sup> Compare Fredegar, iv.60 to *LHF*, 43.

them from their annual tribute.<sup>18</sup> He also made two crucial appointments; his son Sigibert as king of Austrasia and Radulf as *dux* of Thuringia. Initially this shored up the eastern frontier, with the Austrasians fighting more determinedly once they had their own king.<sup>19</sup> The appointment of Radulf, however, proved disastrous, as he rebelled, ignored Sigibert's authority, named himself king of the Thuringians and even allied with Samo's Slavs. Despite his youth, Sigibert led the Austrasians against Radulf, but was defeated and forced to negotiate a retreat back across the Rhine. Thus, at the close of Fredegar's *Chronicle* the eastern frontier of the *regnum Francorum* is in tatters. This is unlikely to be where Fredegar meant to end the narrative, but unfortunately we do not know to what conclusion he was building, nor can much be said for certain about either Thuringia or the eastern frontier more generally in the late-seventh century, since the *LHF*-author says nothing about these events or their aftermath.

Nevertheless, we can still see something of Fredegar's purpose here. The importance of having a king in Austrasia is clear throughout, but even more important was the need for consensus among the Franks, and for them to provide their kings with good advice, especially if the king in question was a minor. Dagobert moved from Austrasia to Neustria despite the advice of his Austrasian nobles and then fell into decadence because of bad advice from the Neustrians. Sigibert, meanwhile, was welcomed by the Austrasians, but they in turn failed to provide a united base of support and advice, causing him to act rashly because of his youth. In other words, while the activities of peripheral peoples could be a threat to the stability of the *regnum*, this could only happen when the Frankish community was not united. The peace east of the Rhine was kept by Chlothar II and was initially maintained by Dagobert, but when the latter 'abandoned' Austrasia things started to go wrong to such a degree not even the appointment of an Austrasian king could prevent it.

But clearly interactions between Franks and non-Franks were not always hostile. Whatever the results of the Frankish subjugation of peripheral peoples, these peoples shared rulers with the Franks, at least nominally. There are examples of Franks and non-Franks fighting together in the same armies led by the same kings, particularly in the case of the Austrasians, who were most troubled by wars with

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<sup>18</sup> Fredegar, iv.68, 74.

<sup>19</sup> Fredegar, iv.74-5.

peoples across the Rhine, but equally could summon armies which contained Saxons, Thuringians and Alamannians. For example, the *LHF*-author relates how in reaction to hostility from his half-brother Chilperic I, Sigibert I assembled an army of peoples from across the Rhine to fight for him.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, Fredegar reports Theudebert II's recruitment of Saxons, Thuringians and other peoples from across the Rhine to fight against his brother Theuderic II,<sup>21</sup> as well as Dagobert I's use of the Alamannians, Saxons and Lombards against the Slavs.<sup>22</sup> Fredegar also reports several cases of direct Frankish interference in peripheral regions through the appointment of *duces*, for example Childebert II's appointment of Uncelen as *dux* of the Alamannians,<sup>23</sup> and Dagobert's appointment of Radulf as *dux* of Thuringia.<sup>24</sup> Examples of non-Franks who were members of the Frankish royal courts are even more telling. During the reign of Theuderic II, three men said to be 'Romans' were raised to important positions: Protadius and Claudius were made mayors of the palace, while Ricomer was a patrician, although the latter has a name that seems distinctly Frankish rather than Roman. The first of these men was also made patrician of Transjura and was killed by Uncelen.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Fredegar provides us with the example of Leuthar, another *dux* of the Alamannians, who was involved in the murder of the Austrasian mayor Otto, which resulted in the accession of the latter's rival Grimoald, son of Pippin I. That such men were part of a community which included Franks and non-Franks could not be denied.

While the *LHF*-author provides no information about non-Frankish matters for the sixty-year period between the joint reign of Chlothar II and Dagobert I in the 620s and the ascent of Pippin II in the 680s, he reinforces the existence of a community which included Franks and non-Franks by mentioning two of the latter – Radbod of Frisia and Eudo of Aquitaine. Admittedly, this author has less to say about these men than the early Carolingian authors, to whose presentations of them we shall return. But each had a crucial role in the war of the 710s, and the way the *LHF*-author writes about them shows the peripheral peoples were not just a threat to the stability of the *regnum Francorum*; they were members of its community.

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<sup>20</sup> *LHF*, 32.

<sup>21</sup> Fredegar, iv.38.

<sup>22</sup> Fredegar, iv.68.

<sup>23</sup> Fredegar, iv.8.

<sup>24</sup> Fredegar, iv.77, iv.87.

<sup>25</sup> Fredegar, iv.24, iv.27-9.

Radbod's first appearance in *LHF* is hardly auspicious. The author says after Pippin II had established his son Grimoald as mayor of the palace in Neustria, he 'conducted many wars against the pagan Radbod and other leaders, and against the Suevi and many other peoples.'<sup>26</sup> So Radbod was just one of several targets against whom Pippin went to war in this period, albeit he is the only leader worth naming. Yet Radbod's place in the community is confirmed when we learn of the marriage of his daughter Theudesinda to Grimoald.<sup>27</sup> Despite this marriage alliance, Radbod sided with the Neustrians in the subsequent war.<sup>28</sup> He thus had a prominent place in the community at this time even though he was neither a Frank nor a Christian. The *LHF*-author was well aware of this ambiguity, and so attempted to present Radbod as an outsider, consistently referring to his paganism, even though such ambiguity could never quite be overcome: Radbod occupied that grey area where the Frankish community met the wider community of the *regnum Francorum*.

Even less is said about Eudo, who only appears in the final chapter of the text, but who proves just as important. Initially he joins the war on the side of the Neustrians and is swiftly defeated by Charles Martel, after which he flees across the Loire with King Chilperic II and the royal treasure.<sup>29</sup> The following year, after the death of his puppet-king Chlothar IV, Charles makes peace with Eudo, who returns Chilperic. It is important to stress at no point in this brief account are Aquitaine, Aquitanians or Vascones mentioned in relation to Eudo. In fact, his flight across the Loire is the only hint we get he was not an inhabitant of the Frankish heartland. The author's contemporaries, of course, would have been in no doubt who Eudo was, and Carolingian authors made his outsider-status much clearer.<sup>30</sup> Like Radbod, Eudo clearly had a place in the community, to the point he was able to take the Frankish king into Aquitaine and keep him there for a year, but he also occupied a grey area.

Radbod and Eudo were traditionally seen as symptomatic of the fragmentation of Frankish hegemony that supposedly took place in the second half of the seventh century. This is certainly how these figures appear in the Carolingian sources: peripheral leaders who opposed the authority of Charles Martel. But *LHF*'s account shows us something rather different. These men were not peripheral; they

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<sup>26</sup> *LHF*, 49.

<sup>27</sup> *LHF*, 50.

<sup>28</sup> *LHF*, 51.

<sup>29</sup> *LHF*, 53.

<sup>30</sup> *Continuationes*, 10, 13, 15; *AMP*, s.a. 718, 726-7, 735.

were allies and supporters of the Frankish king. In this sense they fit with the wider picture that has been revealed by Patrick Geary of resistance across the *regnum Francorum* to the growth of Pippinid power.<sup>31</sup> Admittedly, neither Radbod nor Eudo was a member of the Neustro-Burgundian kin-group that formed the heart of this resistance,<sup>32</sup> but this clearly did not preclude them from sharing the group's feelings with regard to the Pippinids. Given the strength of this group in southern Gaul, particularly in Burgundy and Provence, Eudo's flight across the Loire with Chilperic actually makes more sense: he was taking the king to an area where there were still loyal Merovingian subjects. Radbod and Eudo, then, were typical of non-Frankish leaders in the early eighth century not because they were rebels against Frankish authority but precisely because they owed allegiance to the Merovingian king in defiance of Charles Martel.

Nevertheless, while such men could be integral members of the community of the *regnum Francorum*, ethnic distinctions are found throughout the sources of the seventh and eighth centuries. Indeed, when addressing issues which concerned relationships with non-Franks, Frankish unity was worth emphasising. Thus, from Fredegar we learn the Lombard annual tribute had originally been promised to Guntram and Childebert II. But it was owed 'to the Franks' rather than to these kings, so Chlothar II was well within his rights to excuse the Lombards from their payments, even if we can detect disapproval from Fredegar at the self-interest displayed by Chlothar's advisors in telling him to do so. Likewise, the Lombards placed themselves not under the personal overlordship of Guntram or Childebert, but under the overlordship of the Franks as a whole.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, as we have now seen, such ethnic labels may have been important markers of distinction, but they were not necessarily markers of otherness. During the Merovingian period, Franks could interact with non-Franks aggressively and with hostility, but authors saw no need to resort to consistent denunciations of individuals or whole peoples that stressed their exclusion from the community. Let us now turn to how this changed during the eighth century, and how the early Carolingian period witnessed the development of a 'discourse of otherness'.

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<sup>31</sup> Geary, *Aristocracy*, pp. 126-48.

<sup>32</sup> Geary, *Aristocracy*, pp. 138-43.

<sup>33</sup> Fredegar, iv.45.

### 2.3 Rebellious Peripheries

It would not be too much of a stretch to say rebels are ubiquitous in early Carolingian historical narratives, where we continually hear of peoples and individuals rebelling against the Carolingians, either explicitly, as in the case of the Saxons, or implicitly through accusations of oath- or agreement-breaking. Yet unlike the Carolingian approach to paganism, which saw various attempts to define exactly what constituted unacceptable behaviour and beliefs, there was little effort to systematically define the act of rebellion. It is possible, however, to see a growing concern with the idea of loyalty and disloyalty in Charlemagne's enforcement of oaths of loyalty and in the more 'secular' aspects of documents like the *Admonitio generalis*. In fact, by the end of the eighth century the line between 'political' and 'religious' disloyalty was becoming increasingly blurred, above all due to the Saxon Wars and the idea religious conversion went hand-in-hand with political subjugation.

Although there are many examples of various peoples and individuals acting rebelliously, we shall focus on three groups that particularly came under fire during this period: the Aquitanians, the Saxons and the Lombards. As we have already seen, the Saxons and Lombards had a long historical relationship to the Franks, and their positions with regard to Frankish rule had been negotiated and renegotiated many times for over two hundred by the time of Pippin III's usurpation. The inhabitants of the region south of the Loire, meanwhile, had always been in an ambiguous position with regard to status as part of the *regnum Francorum*. Nevertheless, the Carolingian expansion targeted all three groups and saw them conquered at various points; the Aquitanians during Pippin III's reign and the Lombards and Saxons during Charlemagne's. Yet these conquests took place in very different circumstances, and as we shall see the preludes and progressions of the conquests were presented quite differently: the Saxons were decentralised and pagan, their conquest was arduous and intrinsically linked with their conversion to Christianity; the Lombards were centralised and Christian, but were ultimately caught on the wrong side of the emerging alliance between the Carolingians and the papacy. The Aquitanians, meanwhile, were placed by Carolingian authors in the context of a world of murky loyalties, alliances and treacheries south of the Loire: indeed, these authors purposefully blurred political lines to the detriment of all those in the region. Before we consider these specific cases in more detail, however, it will

be useful to provide some more general examples about the forms the discourse of rebellion took in the eighth and early-ninth centuries.

Above all, the discourse of labelling the enemies of the Carolingians as rebels was one of exclusion. The Carolingian community of the *regnum Francorum* was conceived of as Christian and loyal to the Carolingian dynasty. Rebels, then, were excluded from the community not because of ethnic barriers, but because they had removed themselves from it through acts of disloyalty. The concept of rebellion could be used not only to justify Carolingian wars of expansion, but also to explain why the rulers had undertaken wars against those who were supposed to be their subjects. Yet the peripheral peoples were the primary target of the discourse of rebellion, and so there remained an ethnic element to the discourse. Indeed, the link between rebellion and ethnicity seems to have been so deeply ingrained in the minds of Carolingian authors that certain peoples – for example the Saxons – were seen as inherently rebellious.

Despite the Carolingian focus on Christianity and loyalty, ethnicity remained a crucial tool of distinction, just as it had been during the Merovingian period. Peoples and individuals were identified through ethnic labels, which tend to appear at moments of hostility between the Franks and the people in question; once they had been successfully conquered, peripheral peoples all but disappear from the annals, as is the case not just of the Burgundians (who, as we have seen, were Franks), but also the Aquitanians and Alamannians. On the one hand, this is completely understandable considering the authors of the annals were primarily – though not exclusively – concerned with the wars of expansion being fought by the Carolingians. Yet, at the same time, these conquered peoples must have been included in the *exercitus Francorum* (the army of the Franks) that continued to march against further rebellious opponents. They had, then, on some level become Frankish through their participation in the Carolingians' wars against their enemies, even if this was only a way for the annalists to simplify what may have been a quite complex situation with regard to the composition of the *exercitus Francorum*. Thus, when the Saxons and Frisians are specifically mentioned marching to war alongside

the Franks in the wars of 789-91, we can infer it was because they were not yet seen as fully integrated into the community, perhaps because they were still pagan.<sup>34</sup>

Non-narrative sources also bear witness to the continued importance of ethnic labels. Many of the conquered peoples retained their own law codes, something Charlemagne was keen to ensure, but which Agobard of Lyons lamented during the reign of Louis the Pious.<sup>35</sup> The continued use of ethnic labels served to distinguish between the different groups that made up the emerging Carolingian empire, and perhaps served to elevate the Franks above the rest as the rulers of this empire. But while such labels implied difference from a Frank they did not necessarily imply exclusion or otherness:<sup>36</sup> what was necessary to determine who lay outside the community was a sense of moral judgement. Only by conforming to the standards of the Frankish community – which were at least partly imagined – could one be included, and so it was failure to conform that led to exclusion. Thus, labelling the Carolingians' enemies rebels or otherwise showing them acting against the ruling dynasty placed them outside the community, making them others.

The idea of peripheral peoples rebelling against their Frankish rulers was not new in the eighth century. The concept of rebellion was something that already formed part of the relationship between the Franks and the peripheries in the Merovingian period, albeit a small part. The Carolingian authors of the eighth and ninth centuries, however, took this concept much further than their Merovingian counterparts, and essentially turned it into the fundamental way in which the relationship was understood. This is not to say all peripheral peoples were portrayed as rebellious, of course: even those that were 'disloyal' in some way were not always explicitly described as rebellious. Yet the dichotomy between loyalty and disloyalty dominated the discourse about the Carolingian wars in this period, and combining this with the ideas we explored in the previous chapter tells us a great deal about how the authors writing about these wars perceived the community of which they were a part. To elucidate how this concept was used in the eighth and ninth centuries, we shall explore the depictions of three groups of peoples who are particularly prominent in the narrative sources: the Aquitanians, Vascones (or Basques) and Muslims; the Saxons and Slavs; and the Lombards.

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<sup>34</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 789-91.

<sup>35</sup> Agobard of Lyon, *Adversus legem Gvndobadi*, ed. L. van Acker, *Agobardi Lvgdvnnensis opera Omnia*, CCCM, 52 (1981), pp. 17-28.

<sup>36</sup> Nelson, 'Frankish Identity', pp. 71-2.



### 2.3.1 Aquitanians, Vascones and Muslims

With the possible exception of the Frisians – whom we shall examine further in the next chapter – the Aquitanians were the first of the peripheral peoples with whom the Carolingians entered into an extended war of conquest.<sup>37</sup> Aquitaine's place in the Frankish realm and its position with regard to the Merovingian kings had been unclear since its conquest by Clovis I after the Battle of Vouillé in 507. In the sixth century, the region was divided between the inheritances first of Clovis's sons, then of Chlothar I's sons, although it essentially became part of the Austrasian *Teilreich* by the turn of the seventh century. Following the death of Chlothar II in 629, his son Charibert II was briefly made king of Aquitaine, although Dagobert I absorbed the sub-kingdom into the united *regnum* after the death of Charibert and his son Chilperic in 632. The political trajectory of Aquitaine becomes more difficult to trace after Dagobert's reign, and it is generally considered to have followed the 'centrifugal' tendencies assumed to have taken place in other peripheral regions in the mid- to late-seventh century. We know of at least two seventh-century *duces*, Felix and Lupus, though, the latter of whom was succeeded by the more famous and prominent Eudo in around 700.

Eudo was an ally of the Neustrians against Charles Martel in the civil war of the 710s, although he came to an agreement with Charles in 718, effectively bringing the decade's hostilities to an end. This suggests Aquitaine was only semi-autonomous at most in the early decades of the eighth century, and Eudo still saw himself as part of the *regnum Francorum*: his actions were anti-Pippinid rather than anti-Merovingian or anti-Frankish.<sup>38</sup> Although Eudo initially toed the Carolingian line after being defeated by Charles, hostilities broke out again in the 730s in the wake of Islamic incursions across the Pyrenees. Eudo was again defeated, but Charles left him in power. Eudo's descendants continued his anti-Carolingian policies until the death of his grandson Waifar in 767, although there was a brief rising in the first year of Charlemagne and Carloman's rule, which was easily

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<sup>37</sup> Although problematic for several reasons, the best comprehensive survey of early medieval Aquitaine remains M. Rouche, *L'Aquitaine, des Wisigoths aux Arabes, 418-781: Naissance d'une Région* (Paris, 1979). The wars between the early Carolingians and the last Aquitanian *duces* have also been studied in detail by Bernard Bachrach; see especially B.S. Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare: Prelude to Empire* (Philadelphia, 2001). Unfortunately, neither author offers much critical scrutiny of the sources.

<sup>38</sup> Geary, *Aristocracy*, pp. 126-31.

defeated.<sup>39</sup> While it is important to bear in mind this apparently long-standing anti-Carolingian sentiment when we consider the depiction of the Aquitanians in the sources, and while it may in some sense appear to justify the description of that people as ‘rebellious’, we shall see the depiction was never simply a case of Franks vs Aquitanians: the Vascones and Muslims also entered into the discourse, and together these groups show us the Frankish impression of the region south of the Loire was at the same time both complex and prone to convenient oversimplification.

The Vascones – Basques – have a long history going back to the Roman occupation of the Iberian Peninsula, although it is not always easy to trace.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, they were established as a separate ethnic grouping from their neighbours, and appear to have been a particularly problematic group as far as any of the centralising powers of the Roman and early medieval periods were concerned. Indeed, Fredegar mentions two wars between the Franks and Vascones that were blamed on the latter acting rebelliously.<sup>41</sup> The area of Vasconia was incorporated into the short-lived Aquitanian kingdom of Charibert II,<sup>42</sup> although the vagueness of Fredegar’s account suggests he understood the region to straddle both sides of the Pyrenees, so exactly what was incorporated into Aquitaine is difficult to say.<sup>43</sup> By the eighth century, though, the name *Vasconia* appears to refer more specifically to the area north of the Pyrenees.<sup>44</sup> In neither the seventh nor the eighth century is it easy to determine the precise relationship between Aquitanians and Vascones, but the Carolingian authors of the eighth century were determined the two groups were closely linked and they do not always distinguish between groups or regions in south-east Gaul.

Despite various references to rulers and nobles of Aquitaine in the written sources, there are no references to Aquitanians as a group until the late eighth century. In the previous chapter we explored the significance of a similar kind of approach for seventh-century Burgundy and its inhabitants, concluding there were probably few if any who identified as ‘Burgundians’ in the late seventh century. It

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<sup>39</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 769.

<sup>40</sup> For a general survey of the region and people, see R. Collins, *The Basques* (Oxford, 1986).

<sup>41</sup> Fredegar, iv.54, 78.

<sup>42</sup> Fredegar, iv.57.

<sup>43</sup> Collins, *Basques*, pp. 91-8.

<sup>44</sup> Collins, *Basques*, pp. 96-7.

may be best to conclude, with Roger Collins, the concept of ‘Aquitanians’ was created by the Carolingians, perhaps in response to the creation of a sub-kingdom of Aquitaine for Louis the Pious in 781.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, Ian Wood has also suggested the sources attempt to blur the lines between Aquitanians and Vascones specifically in order to denigrate the former by association with the latter,<sup>46</sup> and we can see there may be something to this.

Of the early Carolingian authors, Fredegar’s continuator has the most to say about Aquitanian matters, beginning with his reference to Eudo leading an army of *Vascones* against Charles Martel, where the *LHF*-author had not specified who was in the army.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps more intriguingly, Fredegar’s continuator refers to Eudo’s son, Hunoald, leading an army of Vascones in rebellion in the year after Charles Martel’s death:<sup>48</sup> the phraseology is crucial because it emphasises Hunoald and his followers acting against their rightful rulers, Charles’s sons Pippin and Carloman. A third reference to Vascones under Aquitanian leadership comes during the continuator’s account of the war between Pippin III and Hunoald’s son Waifar, who ‘came over to the aforesaid king with a large army and with many Vascones who dwell over the Garonne, and from antiquity were called *Vaceti*; but immediately, in their usual manner, all the Vascones turned back, and many of them were killed by Franks.’<sup>49</sup>

The first point to note here is the particularly telling phrase *solito more* used in reference to the Vascones fleeing; in other words, they were inherently cowardly, unlike the brave Franks. This idea of peripheral peoples having natural characteristics that contrasted with those of the Franks was, of course, central to presenting them as others outside the community. The second point to note, though, is the continuator identifies two groups here; Waifar’s army and the Vascones. So here the author seems to acknowledge the Vascones were not the only inhabitants of

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<sup>45</sup> This should not be taken to underestimate the level of unity which existed in Aquitaine in the eighth century, simply the nobility of the region may not have seen themselves as ‘Aquitanians’ before 781. On the unity of the region before this, see Rouche, *L’Aquitaine*, especially pp. 111-32.

<sup>46</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 175-6.

<sup>47</sup> *Continuationes*, 10: ‘Ille quoque hoste Vasconorum commota ad eos ueniens partier aduersus Carlum perrexerunt.’ Compare *LHF*, 53.

<sup>48</sup> *Continuationes*, 25.

<sup>49</sup> *Continuationes*, 47: ‘Dum haec ageretur, Waiofarius cum exercito magno et plurima Wasconorum qui ultra Garonnam commorantur, quem antiquitus uocati sunt Vaecti, super praedicto rege ueniens; set statim solito more omnes Wascones terga uerterunt, plurimi ibidem a Francis interfecti sunt.’ The connection between the Vascones and *Vaceti* was, in fact, incorrect; see R. Collins, ‘The *Vaccae*, the *Vaceti*, and the rise of *Vasconia*’, *Studia Historica*, 6 (Salamanca, 1988), 211-223, at pp. 211-16.

Aquitaine, or perhaps were not inhabitants of Aquitaine at all. Nevertheless, the association between the inhabitants of Aquitaine – whoever they may have been – and the inherently cowardly Vascones is still present.

Waifar is the real target of the continuator's denunciation, though. The last decade of Pippin III's reign had been concerned above all with subjugating Aquitaine, and perhaps for this reason the continuator gives us a rather fuller account of the war than later authors. He draws attention several times to Waifar's treachery: 'Waifar, forming a hostile plan, prepared treachery against King Pippin of the Franks',<sup>50</sup> 'Waifar always dissembled to prepare treacheries against King Pippin.'<sup>51</sup> Likewise, Waifar is associated with the treacheries of others, most notably his uncle Remistanius and Pippin's half-brother Grifo. We shall return to the latter shortly, but it is worth noting his only appearance in the *Continuations*, which is to report his death: he 'formerly had made for sanctuary to Waifar in Vasconia,' but 'was killed... while making for the regions of Lombardy and plotting against the king.'<sup>52</sup> Here we even apparently have Waifar in Vasconia rather than Aquitaine, once more blurring the lines between the two regions and their inhabitants. Remistanius, meanwhile, 'broke his faith which he had promised to King Pippin, and again came to Waifar for his judgement.'<sup>53</sup> Waifar is not just responsible for leading his people in rebellion and treachery, then; he also helps to harbour other treacherous subjects of the king.

While they do not make as much of the Aquitanian *duces* and their subjects as Fredegar's continuator, the annalists still mention them. The *AMP*-author stresses Charles Martel had granted rule over Aquitaine to Eudo's son, Hunoald, 'who promised loyalty to Charles and his sons', but 'after Charles's death he withdrew from his promise of loyalty with arrogant presumption'.<sup>54</sup> Here and in *ARF*, the report about Grifo fleeing to Waifar in Vasconia is repeated, but in the annals Waifar is *dux Aquitaniorum*, furthering obscuring the precise situation in the region:

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<sup>50</sup> *Continuationes*, 42: 'Waiofarius inito iniquo consilio contra Pippino rege Francorum insidias parat.'

<sup>51</sup> *Continuationes*, 44: 'Waiofarius princeps semper contra praedicto rege Pippino insidias parare dissimulate.'

<sup>52</sup> *Continuationes*, 35: 'dudum in Vasconia ad Waiofario principe confugium fecerat... dum partibus Langobardie peteret et insidias contra ipso praedicto rege... interfectus est.'

<sup>53</sup> *Continuationes*, 50: 'Remistanius, filius Eudone quondam, fidem suam quod praedicto regi Pippino promiserat fefellit, et ad Waiofarium iterum ueniens dictioni suae faciens.'

<sup>54</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 742: 'Nam eidem Hunaldo Carolus princeps Aquitaniorum ducatum tribuit, quando sibi et filiis suis fidem promisit. Defuncto vero Carolo ab iure fidei promissae superba presumptione deceptus recessit.'

Waifar is *dux* of the Aquitanians, but to be found in Vasconia.<sup>55</sup> The *AMP*-author adds further information, calling Waifar the treacherous (*perfidus*) *dux Aquitaniorum* and explaining when Pippin had asked him to return Grifo, he had instead ‘formed a perverse plan’.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to the accounts about Waifar, which largely mirror that of Fredegar’s continuator, these later authors were also able to add the brief resistance to Charlemagne after Pippin’s death under the leadership of Hunoald, probably the son of Waifar. According to the *AMP*-author, Charlemagne heard of ‘the faithlessness of Hunoald, who again wished deceitfully to seize the leadership of Aquitaine’,<sup>57</sup> while the *ARF*-author reported ‘The glorious Lord King Charles made a march into the regions of Aquitaine, because Hunoald wished the whole of *Vasconia* and also Aquitaine to rebel’.<sup>58</sup> Unlike Waifar’s drawn-out resistance, though, Hunoald’s efforts seem to have failed after a single campaign by Charlemagne. Throughout these accounts, then, the treachery of the Aquitanian *duces* is emphasised and the lines between Vasconia and Aquitaine, Vascones and Aquitanians are constantly muddled, to the detriment of the regions and their peoples.

Yet the association between Aquitanians and Vascones was not the only one used to blur the political boundaries in southern Gaul. The Aquitanians, along with the inhabitants of Provence, were also associated with the Muslims who were invading the region in the 720s and 30s.<sup>59</sup> The Muslims were certainly outside the mainstream of Frankish society and experience, but of all the early Carolingian authors, Fredegar’s continuator is the most overtly anti-Islamic, perhaps because he was closest in time to Charles Martel’s wars against the Muslims. Carolingian depictions of Muslims were dictated by the nature of the interactions between them and the Franks, interactions which were not always hostile, so it was not always necessary

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<sup>55</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 748; *ARF*, s.a. 749.

<sup>56</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 750: ‘*Direxit autem legatos suos ad Waifarium, ut sibi fratrem suum ad se fugientem redderet. Quod ille pravo inito consilio facere contempsit.*’

<sup>57</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 769: ‘*Carolus audiens perfidiam Hunaldi, qui iterum fraudulenter Aquitaniae principatum arripere volebat.*’

<sup>58</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 769: ‘*Domnus Carolus gloriosus rex iter peragens partibus Aquitaniae, eo quod Hunaldus voluit rebellare totam Wasconiam etiam et Aquitaniam.*’

<sup>59</sup> See R. Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain, 710-797* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 86-96.

for Frankish authors to paint Muslims in a negative light. But what Fredegar's continuator has to say is incredibly negative.

In 732, after having been defeated by Charles Martel, Eudo of Aquitaine allegedly made an alliance with the Muslims against Charles. According to Fredegar's continuator, he 'raised the faithless Saracen people' because 'he was defeated and scorned', making him responsible for allowing the Muslims into southern Gaul, where they went on to burn the churches and slay the inhabitants of Bordeaux and Poitiers.<sup>60</sup> The *AMP*-author tells a similar story, with Eudo inviting the 'faithless Saracen people' to help him 'defend his land' against Charles, and the Muslims going on to ravage Bordeaux and Poitiers.<sup>61</sup> Note the use of the adjective *perfida* applied to the Muslims in each case, which suggests they were untrustworthy allies, as shown by their subsequent actions. Of course, Charles was able to defeat the invaders, and, other than the usual appeal to the aid of God, there is no discernible religious element to this incident: Christians, after all, could be just as prone as Muslims to burning churches and slaying civilians. Certainly, there is no mention in either passage of the religion of the Saracens.

Intriguingly, though, the Spanish *Chronicle of 754* shows us Eudo as a commander of the Franks and enemy of the Muslims. Eudo defeated the Muslims at the Battle of Toulouse in 721,<sup>62</sup> which was celebrated by Pope Gregory II but – perhaps understandably – neglected by Frankish authors.<sup>63</sup> He apparently later entered into a marriage alliance with Uthman ibn Abu Nisah, probably against Abd ar-Rahman.<sup>64</sup> Contradicting the Frankish sources further, the *Chronicle* reports Abd ar-Rahman came north of the Pyrenees against Eudo, not at his invitation, and defeated the Aquitanian *dux* before going on to be defeated by Charles Martel, who according to this source had been summoned by Eudo as an ally.<sup>65</sup> The political situation south of the Loire was clearly more complex than Frankish authors wished it to appear.

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<sup>60</sup> *Continuationes*, 13.

<sup>61</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 732.

<sup>62</sup> *Chronicle of 754*, ed. E. López Pereira, *Crónica mozárabe de 754: Edición crítica y traducción* (Zaragoza, 1980), 69.

<sup>63</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis: Texte, introduction et commentaire* (Paris, 1955-1957), 'Life 91', 11.

<sup>64</sup> *Chronicle of 754*, 79.

<sup>65</sup> *Chronicle of 754*, 80.

The account of the Muslim invasion of Provence in 736/7 found in *AMP* follows a similar course to the accounts of the battle of 732. The Saracens invade the region, but are defeated by Charles (with the help of God). The Saracens are described as ‘savage’, but again there is no comment on the religion of the invaders.<sup>66</sup> In the account of Fredegar’s continuator, though, the Muslims are referred to as the ‘strong people of Ishmael, who are known by the corrupt name Saracens’: the reference to Ishmael shows the author knew something of the Muslims and their claim to Biblical descent from the son of Abraham. The importance of the Biblical connection in this passage becomes clearer when the author describes Charles’s siege of Avignon, which the Muslims had occupied.

As at Jericho they charged over the walls and high fortifications with the din of armies and the sound of trumpets, and with siege engines and ropes, entering the most well defended town they set it on fire, they captured the armies of their enemies, killing, they slaughtered and overthrew, and effectively restored it to Charles’s authority.<sup>67</sup>

While this is not a perfect parallel to the siege of Jericho, where the walls were destroyed simply by the blowing of the trumpets,<sup>68</sup> the Biblical reference was clearly important to the author. This kind of language is without precedent in the rest of the text, but we might speculate it is an example of the idea of the Franks as the New Israel, albeit an isolated one which reminds us not to exaggerate this feature of Carolingian culture.<sup>69</sup> In this instance, however, it is clear the author wished to present the Franks and their enemies as representing Biblical counterparts; perhaps the presentation was based on the idea of the Franks reclaiming land that was rightfully theirs. Again, the parallel is not perfect, but perhaps it was close enough. Ultimately, then, the purpose may have been to show the Franks as the *populus Dei* (although the term is not used) fighting against a savage, heathen *gens*. Interestingly, the Muslims are also described as having ‘rebelled’, although exactly how the author conceived of this is unclear, since they could in no way be seen to owe loyalty to Charles Martel and the Franks, nor is there any such claim in the source. Instead, it seems likely the author was simply using the language applied to any against whom Charles fought.

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<sup>66</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 737.

<sup>67</sup> *Continuationes*, 20: ‘*In modum Hiericho cum strepitu hostium et sonitum tubarum, cum machinis et restium funibus super muros et edium moenia inruunt, urbem munitissimam ingredients succendunt, hostes inimicos suorum capiunt, interficientes trucidant atque prosternent et in sua ditione efficaciter restitunt.*’

<sup>68</sup> Joshua, vi.20.

<sup>69</sup> Garrison, ‘Franks as the New Israel?’.

Given this use of an increasingly common *topos*, we should not be surprised to also find a connection between the Muslims and a local ruler. In this case it was Maurontus, patrician of Provence, who allegedly invited the Muslims into the region.<sup>70</sup> Like Eudo before him, he is said to have done so in order to make an alliance against Charles Martel, and the continuator describes the Saracens ‘lying in wait with treacherous men under a certain deceitful and fraudulent Maurontus and his allies’.<sup>71</sup> Again, like Eudo, Maurontus seems to have been one of those local rulers who resisted the expansion of Pippinid power but likely was not a separatist seeking regional independence.<sup>72</sup> The case for Maurontus’s alliance with the Muslims seems better than that for Eudo,<sup>73</sup> but as we have seen with the latter, we cannot assume the reality was as clear as the Frankish source make it appear. It is difficult to say who was worse in the eyes of the Carolingian audience, the Muslim invaders or the men who allowed them to invade Frankish territory. This, however, would be to ask the wrong question. Both groups were outside the community, perhaps for different reasons, although as the reference to the Muslims as ‘rebellious’ shows, this was not a discourse in which discrete categories of otherness were necessarily being drawn.

As already implied, later Carolingian authors were not inherently as hostile towards the Muslims as Fredegar’s continuator had been, and this is indicative of the way in which the discourse of otherness developed: generally speaking it was those in closest proximity to the *regnum Francorum* who were most likely to become the target of this discourse. This was an entirely sensible approach, since the closest groups were those who represented the most tangible threat to the Franks. After the 730s the Muslims largely stayed south of the Pyrenees, and any hostile encounters between the two groups occurred when the Franks marched into the Iberian Peninsula. The encounters we find in the annals of the second half of the eighth century and first quarter of the ninth tend to be reports of peaceful embassies sent from Muslims further afield, usually associated with Baghdad. This shows, despite their religious differences – and unlike the pagans of Germania – the Muslims were not inherently other; they could be traded with and were seen if not as equals then at least being on a similar level as the Byzantine Empire in terms of their relationship

<sup>70</sup> See Geary, *Aristocracy*, pp. 126-48.

<sup>71</sup> *Continuationes*, 20: ‘*insidiantibus infidelis hominibus sub dolo et fraude Mauronto quidem cum sociis suis.*’

<sup>72</sup> Geary, *Aristocracy*, pp. 126-31.

<sup>73</sup> Geary, *Aristocracy*, pp. 127-8, n. 9.



to Frankish royal power.<sup>74</sup> And even if there are occasional hints Spanish Christians being ruled by Muslims was not a good thing, the Muslims were not subjected to anything like the same degree of hostility as other peoples.

To give perhaps the most prominent and well known example of this, in 778 Charlemagne marched into northern Spain and subjugated the area around Pamplona: according to *ARF* and *AMP* he then returned to Francia, apparently without incident.<sup>75</sup> Yet the reviser of *ARF* reports the army crossing the Pyrenees, where ‘the Vascones gathered for an ambush, attacking the rearguard of the army and throwing the whole army into confusion with great uproar’. The battle, which became a central part of later medieval legend as the Battle of Roncesvalles, apparently witnessed the destruction of most of Charlemagne’s army, and according to the annalist ‘Admitting the indignation of this injury darkened the king’s heart to the great part of what he had achieved in Spain’.<sup>76</sup> There is barely any mention of the Muslims in this passage, other than Charlemagne receiving hostages from them, and there is certainly no religious dichotomy, but the Vascones were able to make the king feel he had achieved nothing. More bad news followed Charlemagne’s return to Francia, as he learned the Saxons had taken advantage of his absence to invade across the Rhine, ‘they rebelled again following their evil custom’ according to *ARF* and ‘neglecting the faith they had promised’ according to *AMP*.<sup>77</sup> Here the Muslims are not the object of hostile discourse. Rather, the aftermath of the Spanish campaign is used to highlight the treachery of the Vascones and the Saxons. In fact, when Einhard came to narrate the incident in his *Vita Karoli*, he made no mention of the Muslims at all, and only focussed on the treachery of the Vascones.<sup>78</sup> Once again, then, the Vascones, who had been used to vilify the inhabitants of the regions

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<sup>74</sup> For two studies of the relations between the early Carolingians and the Muslim world, see M. McCormick, ‘Charlemagne and the Mediterranean World: Communications, Arab Coins and Commerce at the Time of the Paderborn Meeting’, in P. Godman, J. Jarnut and P. Johaneck (eds), *Am Vorabend der Kaiserkrönung: Das Epos Karolus Magnus et Leo papa und der Papstbesuch in Paderborn 799* (Berlin, 2002), pp. 193-218; M. McCormick, ‘Pippin III, the Embassy of Caliph al Mansur, and the Mediterranean World’, in M. Becher and J. Jarnut (eds), *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751: Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung* (Münster, 2004), pp. 221-41. For the Carolingian interest and presence in the Holy Land specifically, see M. McCormick, *Charlemagne’s Survey of the Holy Land: Wealth, Personnel, and Buildings of a Mediterranean Church Between Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Washington D.C., 2011).

<sup>75</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 778; *AMP*, s.a. 778.

<sup>76</sup> Revised *ARF*, s.a. 778: ‘*In cuius summitate Wascones insidiis conlocatis extremum agmen adorti totum exercitum magno tumultu perturbant... Cuius vulneris accepti dolor magnam partem rerum feliciter in Hispania gestarum in corde regis obnubilavit.*’

<sup>77</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 778: ‘*secundum consuetudinem malam iterum rebellati sunt.*’ *AMP*, s.a. 778: ‘*postposita fide, quam promiserant.*’

<sup>78</sup> *Vita Karoli*, 9.

south of the Loire, were being held up as archetypes of treachery. But let us now turn to a region even more plagued by treachery and rebellion than southern Gaul, that east of the Rhine, and in particular Saxony.

### 2.3.2 Saxons and Slavs

Of all the peoples who feature in the early Carolingian narrative sources, none is more prominent or more emblematic of the Frankish concern for loyalty than the Saxons.<sup>79</sup> Where other peoples come and go from the narratives and are sometimes only implicitly depicted as disloyal or rebellious, the Saxons are ubiquitous in the early Carolingian sources and are almost always explicitly described as acting rebelliously. In fact, so closely were they linked with the concept of rebellion it was said to be in their nature to rebel against Frankish rule. Another major group of peoples east of the Rhine, the Slavs, feature nothing like as prominently as the Saxons. The presentations of these two peoples provide an important point of comparison for several reasons: Both were actually large groups comprised of several smaller sub-groups with their own names and geographical locations (much like the Franks themselves); unlike most of the peripheral peoples, both groups were still pagan in the eighth century; perhaps most importantly of all, both groups had a long and ambiguous historical relationship with the Franks. But throughout what follows it is important to remember the Slavs were both more distant from the Frankish heartlands and a far larger group than the Saxons; indeed, when reading these sources there is barely a sense of ‘the Slavs’ as anything like a unified group.<sup>80</sup>

Frankish wars against the Saxons went back to the sixth century, and were generally presented as resulting in the Franks obtaining promises of tribute from their neighbours; much like their wars against the other peoples east of the Rhine these were not wars of conquest, nor were they presented as such, even if there were hints

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<sup>79</sup> The best general survey of the Saxons remains M. Springer, *Die Sachsen* (Stuttgart, 2003). See also I.K. Rembold, *The Politics of Christianization in Carolingian Saxony* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Sidney Sussex College, 2014). On the issue of Saxon loyalty in the Frankish sources, see Flierman, ‘*Gens perfida*’.

<sup>80</sup> For the pre-Carolingian history of the Slavs, see F. Curta, *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region c.500-700* (Cambridge, 2001). See also F. Curta, ‘Slavs in Fredegar and Paul the Deacon: Medieval *gens* or ‘Scourge of God’?’, *Early Medieval Europe*, 6 (1997), 141-67.

at the idea of Saxon rebelliousness.<sup>81</sup> Yet Fredegar makes it clear the Saxons had been exempted of any future debt to the Franks, whether of tribute or of loyalty, when Dagobert I excused them from paying their annual tribute of 500 cows in return for aid against the Slavs. Fredegar laments the aid Dagobert received was of little use, but the king excused the Saxons from their tribute anyway.<sup>82</sup> The first we hear of the Saxons from a Carolingian source, though, is Fredegar's continuator, who, after having reported the end of the Frankish civil war from which Charles Martel had emerged victorious, reports the new leader of the Franks turned his attention to the Saxons, who had 'risen in rebellion'.<sup>83</sup> Exactly what the author imagined this 'rebellion' as meaning is difficult to say, but it should be assumed there was some measure of hindsight involved. Immediately on their appearance in a Carolingian source, though, we have the idea the Saxons owed loyalty to the Franks. But for all their later prominence, there is only one further mention of Charles undertaking a war against the Saxons, this time described as 'most pagan', but again said to have risen in rebellion.<sup>84</sup>

More revealing, however, is the continuator's report of one of the wars undertaken by Pippin III against the Saxons. The Saxons are said to have 'attempted to feign the faith which they promised to Pippin's brother in their usual manner'.<sup>85</sup> As we shall see, the idea the Saxons were inherently treacherous, disloyal and rebellious was a standard *topos* for the Carolingians. The important part, though, is the result of Pippin's campaign against them, after which they 'submitted to the rule of the Franks, that hereafter they promised to return to the ancient custom, by which they had offered tribute and payment to Chlothar'.<sup>86</sup> This is a direct reference to the historical relationship between the Franks and the Saxons and the tribute Dagobert had released the latter from, now used to frame the contemporary relationship between the two peoples. Such a connection may be an implicit criticism of the later Merovingians who had failed to maintain the Saxon payments, but the author was

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<sup>81</sup> *LHF*, 41.

<sup>82</sup> Fredegar, iv.74. See also *DLH*, iv.14.

<sup>83</sup> *Continuationes*, 11: 'Per idem tempus rebellantibus Saxonis eis Carlus princeps ueniens praeoccupauit ac debellauit uictorque reuertur.'

<sup>84</sup> *Continuationes*, 19: 'Itemque rebellantibus Saxonis paganissimis qui ultra Renum fluuium consistent, strenuous uir Carlus hoste commoto Francorum.'

<sup>85</sup> *Continuationes*, 31: 'Eodem anno Saxones more consueto fidem quam germane suo promiserant mentire conati sunt.'

<sup>86</sup> *Continuationes*, 31: 'iure Francorum sese ut antiquitus mos fuerunt subdiderunt et ea tributa quae Chlothario quondam prestiterant plenissima solutione ab eo tempore deinceps esse reddituros promiserunt.'

probably attempting to reinforce the idea the Saxons owed loyalty to the Franks, since the re-institution of the ‘ancient custom’ is directly linked to the Saxon submission to Frankish rule: in this Carolingian version of history Pippin is remaking a Frankish tradition, just as he did with turning the Marchfield into the Mayfield. As with the Mayfield, though, Fredegar’s continuator is the only one of our authors to make anything of this idea, further suggesting this author was more concerned than later authors with stressing continuity with the Merovingian past.

But the continuator also mentions the Saxons less often than later authors. Again, this is understandable. That the Saxons became so ubiquitous, and that they became so tied to concepts of rebelliousness was a direct result of them being the target of the longest and most hard-fought series of campaigns undertaken by the Franks in the eighth century. In 772, Charlemagne followed his predecessors in marching across the Rhine and into Saxony. It is interesting to note, though, the annals do not have this campaign being undertaken in the context of Saxon rebellion or treachery. Rather, Charlemagne simply holds an assembly at Worms and then marches into Saxony.<sup>87</sup>

While it is not portrayed as such in the annals, Einhard saw this campaign as the start of Charlemagne’s Saxon Wars, although he conceded there was a brief interruption during the conquest of the Lombard kingdom from 773-4.<sup>88</sup> Like Fredegar’s continuator, Einhard had a sense of the long history between the Franks and Saxons, which he saw as having been dominated not so much by ‘rebellions’ as by constant raiding across the borders of both regions. Nevertheless, such raiding was portrayed as the Saxons breaking the peace and the Franks responding, which seems to provide the justification for the decision by the Franks – not by Charlemagne alone – to undertake a war of conquest.<sup>89</sup> Not only did the Saxons break the peace; they were also ‘both wild by nature and devoted to the worship of spirits – like almost all the peoples living in Germania – and are adversaries of our religion, thinking it no dishonour to transgress the law, whether divine or human’.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 772. *AMP*, s.a. 772.

<sup>88</sup> *Vita Karoli*, 7.

<sup>89</sup> *Vita Karoli*, 7: ‘*Suberant et causae, quae cotidie pacem conturbare poterant... in quibus caedes et rapinae et incendia vicissim fieri non cessabant. Quibus adeo Franci sunt irritati, ut non iam vicissitudinem reddere, sed apertum contra eos bellum suscipere dignum iudicarent.*’

<sup>90</sup> *Vita Karoli*, 7: ‘*quia Saxones, sicut omnes fere Germaniam incolentes nationes, et natura feroces et cultui daemonum dediti nostraeque religioni contrarii neque divina neque humana iura vel polluere vel transgredi inhonestum arbitrabantur.*’

Einhard then goes on to note the war, which lasted thirty-three years, would have been much shorter if not for Saxon *perfidia*:

Sometimes they were so subdued and softened that they would promise also to be willing to renounce the worship of spirits and to place themselves under the Christian religion. But just as they would sometimes be prone to promising this, so they were always overthrowing the promises. It would not be sufficient to judge to which of these they could more easily and more truly pronounce; of course, once the war with them was begun hardly any year finished in which a change of this sort was not made by them.<sup>91</sup>

In this passage, Einhard neatly summarises the Carolingian characterisation of the Saxons as a treacherous, pagan people, with a close association between these traits. But for all his outright hostility towards the Saxons, Einhard at least ends on a positive note by explaining the Saxons eventually accepted Charlemagne's conquest, 'abandoning the worship of spirits and the remaining ceremonies of their ancestors and accepting the Christian faith and religion': as a result 'they could be united with the Franks and made as one people with them.'<sup>92</sup> Yet Einhard was writing after the end of the wars and with all the benefits of hindsight that allowed him to present such a coherent picture of the beginning, progress and end of the war as if it was a single, unified series of campaigns against a single, unified enemy. Such an impression is not what we get from the sources written while the war was still on-going.<sup>93</sup>

While a cohesive understanding of the Saxon Wars may well have come into existence during Charlemagne's later years and after his death, it would be wrong to assume earlier Carolingian authors had such a view of what, for them, were contemporary events. Indeed, in the annals the Saxon Wars appear closer to what they actually were: a series of escalating campaigns that ultimately resulted in the subjugation of Saxony. There is no sense the campaign of 772 was the start of something new, although it does appear rather spectacular with the dramatic destruction of the Irminsul accompanied by miracles.<sup>94</sup> Thus, it seems even for authors writing at the time, Charlemagne's Saxon campaigns had the character not

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<sup>91</sup> *Vita Karoli*, 7: 'aliquoties ita domiti et emolliti, ut etiam cultum daemonum dimittere et Christianae religioni se subdere velle promitterent. Sed sicut ad haec facienda aliquoties proni, sic ad eadem pervertenda semper fuere praecipites, non sit ut satis aestimare, ad utrum horum faciliores verius dici possint; quippe cum post inchoatum cum eis bellum vix ullus annus exactus sit, quo non ab eis huiuscemodi facta sit permutatio.'

<sup>92</sup> *Vita Karoli*, 7: 'abiectione daemonum cultu et relictis patriis caerimoniis, Christianae fidei atque religionis sacramenta suscipere et Francis adunati unus cum eis populus efficerentur.'

<sup>93</sup> For much of what follows, see also Flierman, 'Gens perfidia'.

<sup>94</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 772.

just of a war against a people, but against their paganism as well. Because of this, many of the king's victories over the Saxons are accompanied by their acceptance of Christianity in the wake of defeat. The first instances of this come in the aftermaths of the rebellions of 776 and 777,<sup>95</sup> and consequently baptisms become a recurring feature of the Saxon Wars.<sup>96</sup>

Yet what becomes clear from the annals is the Saxons were not the homogenous group Einhard presented them as. After the first major victories of the wars, in 775, Charlemagne receives submission and hostages from three different groups of Saxons: the Austreliudi (Eastphalians), the Angrarii and the Westphalians.<sup>97</sup> In 780, the Bardengavenses and Nordliudians also submitted to baptism, although the latter rebelled in 798.<sup>98</sup> While such sub-groups are not found consistently in these accounts, this is an important indication Frankish authors were at least aware of the divisions present within Saxony. Indeed, while the names of the Saxon sub-groups do not seem to have entered common usage, the regions they inhabited continued to be used as geographical markers for the locations of individual campaigns and the progress of the wars. Likewise, despite the oversimplification by these authors, the lack of centralised authority – or even identity – within Saxony probably contributed to the difficulty of the Frankish conquest.

Nevertheless, knowledge of these sub-groups and sub-regions within Saxony did not make the late eighth-century annalists any less prone to presenting the Saxons as inherently rebellious. Let us consider the language the *ARF*-author used to describe Saxon treachery: in 778 the Saxons took advantage of the king's absence in Spain to rebel again 'following their usual custom';<sup>99</sup> in 782 and 784 they 'rebelled again in the usual manner';<sup>100</sup> in 793 'A messenger brought word to Regensburg that the Saxons again had broken their faith';<sup>101</sup> in 795 the Saxons 'rendered void their promise to preserve Christianity and to keep the faith of the king, in the usual manner'.<sup>102</sup> In all of these passages we find *iterum* – 'again' – or *solito more* – 'the usual manner' – used to describe the actions of the Saxons, sometimes in

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<sup>95</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 776-7.

<sup>96</sup> For example, *ARF*, s.a. 780, 785.

<sup>97</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 775.

<sup>98</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 780, 798.

<sup>99</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 778.

<sup>100</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 782, 784.

<sup>101</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 794.

<sup>102</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 795.

combination. This shows the issue was not just that the Saxons were renegeing on recent agreements they had made with Charlemagne: it was in their nature to do so.

Yet the final conquest of Saxony in 804 did not spell the end of anti-Saxon rhetoric: later authors could be just as hostile, if not more so. Einhard at least aimed to show the Saxons had been successfully integrated into the *regnum Francorum* and the *populus Christianorum*. Other authors, writing in the first decade of the ninth century, were not so convinced. The *AMP*-author generally followed the narrative of *ARF*, but added certain details which make the Saxons seem even more treacherous. For example, in *ARF* Saxon treachery only becomes a ‘custom’ from 778, but the *AMP*-author uses ‘*solito more*’ as early as 776, which for *ARF* had been the first Saxon rebellion – at least against Charlemagne.<sup>103</sup> Likewise, the final campaign of the wars, after which Charlemagne removed many Saxons from their lands and forced them into Francia, was presented more as an expedient solution than a punishment by *ARF*, but for the *AMP*-author it was a direct reaction to the ongoing treachery of the Wigmodian Saxons, who had apparently been encouraging the rebellious behaviour of the other Saxons.<sup>104</sup> At the same time, the author mentions ‘the many faithless regions of Saxony’, another indication of the inherently treacherous nature of the Saxons.<sup>105</sup>

For the reviser of *ARF*, hindsight made the Saxons even more inherently treacherous than they had been in the annals he revised. Unlike the original *ARF*, where Saxon rebellions are linked with moments of treaty-breaking or the abandoning of Christianity, the reviser applies phrases about *perfidia* to the moments of the original treaties and baptisms, warning the audience in advance the Saxons will betray their oaths to Charlemagne.<sup>106</sup> At the same time, the reviser is also the first author explicitly to give the impression Charlemagne’s Saxon campaigns were intended from the beginning to result in the conquest of Saxony, although this ‘beginning’ is placed in 775 rather than 772:

When the king spent the winter in the villa of Quierzy he formed a plan that he would attack the faithless and treacherous people of the Saxons with war and would

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<sup>103</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 776.

<sup>104</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 804: ‘*quam illos qui in Wigmoti commanebant et frequentibus maleficiis populum Saxonum a via veritatis averterant, cum mulieribus et infantibus cum Dei auxilio sapientissima dispositione de Saxoniam per diversas vias dirigens funditus exterminavit et per Gallias ceterasque regiones imperii sui sine ulla lesione exercitus sui dispersit.*’

<sup>105</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 804: ‘*Missis inde exercitibus suis per diversas partes Saxoniam perfidos illos.*’

<sup>106</sup> Revised *ARF*, s.a. 775, 776, 777, 785, 795, 796, 797.

continue to do so, until either they were defeated and subjected to the Christian religion or they were entirely destroyed.<sup>107</sup>

There was another factor at work in Saxon rebellions which all the annalists acknowledged: the evil influence of Widukind. This Saxon leader appears as a somewhat elusive and enigmatic figure, forever on the peripheries of the Saxon conflict until he was finally brought to baptism in 785: he has proved just as enigmatic for modern historians. The reviser of *ARF* calls him a Westphalian – ‘*unum ex primoribus Westfalaorum*’<sup>108</sup> – but this is the only reference to his place of origin. Beyond this, nothing is known of him or his career before 777, when his absence from the assembly at Paderborn is noted: he was apparently in rebellion and, along with some fellow rebels, had taken refuge in the regions of the Northmen.<sup>109</sup> After this first appearance, he is said to have instigated the rebellions of 778 and 782, and to have been absent from the assemblies at Cologne and Verden in the latter year.<sup>110</sup>

Whatever his actual role in the Saxon rebellions of the late 770s and first half of the 780s, though, Widukind’s resistance to Charlemagne was short-lived. In 785 he and his associates came to Attigny to surrender and be baptised. This was clearly seen as a ground-breaking development, since it led the *ARF*-author to proclaim afterwards ‘all of Saxony was subjugated’:<sup>111</sup> the events of the next twenty years would show this to be an overly optimistic proclamation. We hear nothing more of Widukind after his baptism, although his descendants continued to play an important part in the political life of Carolingian Saxony,<sup>112</sup> and his life and death, became the subject of legend; he remained a sort of German folk hero – albeit a somewhat controversial one – into the Nazi period.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Revised *ARF*, s.a. 775: ‘*Cum rex in villa Carisiaco hiemaret, consilium iniit, ut perfidam ac foedifragam Saxonum gentem bello adgrederetur et eo usque persevararet, dum aut victi christianiae religioni subicerentur aut omnino tollerentur.*’

<sup>108</sup> Revised *ARF*, s.a. 777.

<sup>109</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 777.

<sup>110</sup> *ARF*, 778, 782.

<sup>111</sup> *ARF*, 785: ‘*Et ibi baptizati sunt supranominati Widochindus et Abbi una cum sociis eorum; et tunc tota Saxonia subiugata est.*’

<sup>112</sup> The best evidence is Rudolf and Meginhard of Fulda, *Translatio sancti Alexandri*, ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH SS*, 2 (Hanover, 1829), which was written for Widukind’s grandson Waldbraht. See I.N. Wood, ‘Before or After Mission: Social Relations Across the Middle and Lower Rhine in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries’, in I.L. Hansen and C. Wickham (eds), *The Long Eighth Century: Production, Distribution and Demand* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 149-66, at p. 162.

<sup>113</sup> P. Lambert, ‘Duke Widukind and Charlemagne in Twentieth-Century Germany: Myths of Origin and Constructs of National Identity’, in C. Raudvere, K. Stala and T. Stauning Willert (eds), *Rethinking the Space for Religion: New Actors in Central and Southeast Europe on Religion, Authenticity and Belonging* (Lund, 2013), pp. 97-125.



But for all the *ARF*-author's naivety about the importance of Widukind's baptism, this and the way his role in earlier events are portrayed in *ARF* give us a good indication of how the author understood the situation in Saxony. While there are many generalised statements about 'the Saxons' rebelling, their leaders were important. When three Saxon sub-groups submitted to Charlemagne in 775, the leaders of two groups are named: Hassi leads the Austreliudi and Bruno the Angrarii.<sup>114</sup> It was important for the author to show not just these groups had submitted to Frankish rule, but their rulers had led them to this submission. Conversely, Widukind appears not as leader of a single sub-group, but as leader of all the Saxons. He convinces them to rebel, and as long as he holds out on the peripheries of Saxony or hiding among the Danes, the region and its people cannot be conquered; once he submits to baptism *tota Saxonia* is conquered (at least in theory).

While there were regional leaders within Saxony, it is worth remembering 'the Saxons' as an over-arching group were acephalous; there was no single leader of a unified Saxon people as there were such leaders for other peripheral peoples. In the 770s and 780s, Widukind was the closest Frankish authors could find to such a figure, so he was directly tied to the progress of the conquest. When the two decades after Widukind's conversion proved the error of this connection, authors abandoned the pretence that any one Saxon was preventing the conquest, and instead simply blamed the inherent treachery of the Saxons. Thus we find ourselves back at the extremity of Einhard's presentation, which makes no mention of Widukind or any other leaders, and simply has the Saxons as a uniform people. But not all the peoples east of the Rhine were treated in such a way, as an examination of the Slavs will show.

Being more geographically distant from the Frankish heartlands and largely situated outside the areas conquered by the Franks during the late eighth century, the Slavs understandably feature less in the early Carolingian narratives than do the Saxons.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, they had not featured all that prominently in the Merovingian sources,

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<sup>114</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 775.

<sup>115</sup> For general overviews of the Slavs see P.M. Barford, *The Early Slavs: Culture and Society and Early Medieval Eastern Europe* (London, 2001); F. Curta, *Slavs*; T. Lienhard, "Les Chiens de Dieu": *La politique slave des Mérovingiens et des Carolingiens* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université Charles de Gaulle and Universität Hamburg, 2003).

although they were part of an important narrative running through the later chapters of Fredegar's *Chronicle*. Compared to other peripheral peoples, then, the Franks had little claim to rulership over the Slavs, and the early Carolingians do not seem to have been eager to push such claims, as they increasingly were with the Saxons. Instead, early Carolingian discussion of the Slavs focussed on the distinction between those groups which were allied to the Carolingians and those which were allied to their enemies. Because of this, we almost always find in these sources references to particular Slavic groups, with little if any sense of a homogenous Slavic people. Likewise, we hear little of Slavic paganism or of attempts to convert Slavic groups because even those which were allies were not part of the community proper.

The Slavs actually have a rather important role towards the end of Fredegar's *Chronicle*. They appear in the story of the Frankish merchant, Samo, who travelled to the land of the Slavs – or more specifically, the Wends – and, after helping free them from Avar rule, was made their king.<sup>116</sup> Fredegar refers to this group over whom Samo became king as both Slavs and Wends – *Sclauos coinomento Winedos* – and initially uses both terms almost interchangeably.<sup>117</sup> But, while Samo is made *rex Sclavinorum*, the later sections of the account refer only to Wends. Florin Curta has seen the first part of the account as a sort of *origo gentis* in which the Wends emerge from the Slavs,<sup>118</sup> although this fails to explain the full significance of Samo's title. Nevertheless, the account of Samo aiding the Slavs against the Avars certainly shows a 'new people' emerging on the edge of the Frankish world, and one which would greatly contribute to what Fredegar portrayed as the deterioration of Frankish authority east of the Rhine under Dagobert I and Sigibert III.<sup>119</sup>

Samo and the Slavs were in an ambiguous position with regard to the *regnum Francorum*, as Fredegar acknowledges but never quite clarifies. When Samo first arrives among them, the Slavs are subject to the Avars, and the merchant helps them free themselves, which leads to his being made king. At this point the reader may infer, since Samo himself was a Frank, this would place his subjects under Frankish sovereignty, but Fredegar makes no explicit claim along such lines.

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<sup>116</sup> Fredegar, iv.48. On this incident, see Curta, 'Slavs'; Barford, *Early Slavs*, pp. 79-80; Lienhard, *Les Chiens de Dieu*, pp. 127-34.

<sup>117</sup> Fredegar, iv.48, iv.68.

<sup>118</sup> Curta, 'Slavs', pp. 148-53.

<sup>119</sup> Curta, 'Slavs', p. 148.

Instead, after learning about Slavic attacks on Frankish merchants, we are presented with a peculiar exchange between Samo and Dagobert's representative, Sicharius.

Sicharius had been dispatched to request Samo make amends for the Slavic attacks, but 'in the manner of pagans and perverse arrogance, nothing which had been asked of him was repaired by Samo', who agreed only to look into the matter.<sup>120</sup> Sicharius – the 'foolish envoy' (*stultus legatus*) – then claims Samo and his Slavs are Dagobert's subjects, but Samo counters they are only Frankish subjects while Dagobert continues to treat them in a friendly manner, a statement which should be linked to Fredegar's comments in the same passage about how the Austrasians felt Dagobert had treated them unfairly. The implication would seem to be a ruler could only rely on the loyalty of his subjects if he acted in the correct manner. In any case, Sicharius responds by saying: "It is not possible that Christians and servants of God are able to live in friendship with dogs."<sup>121</sup> Samo in turn responds: "If you are the servants of God and we the dogs of God, as long as you constantly act against him, we are permitted to tear you with our jaws."<sup>122</sup>

This exchange, from which neither man emerges in a particularly good light, leads the start of open hostilities between the Franks and Slavs. There is a hint in Samo's final threat Fredegar envisioned the Slavs as filling the role of the 'scourge of God',<sup>123</sup> and this is the only passage in which a people is judged for its paganism, but nothing further is made of either the paganism or the idea of the Slavs as scourge of God in subsequent chapters, so this point should not be pushed too far. Instead, we should see the exchange between Sicharius and Samo primarily as part of Fredegar's discussion of the deterioration of Frankish authority east of the Rhine, in which both the peripheral peoples and the Franks themselves played a part. Dagobert had had the potential to be a great king, but after his move to Neustria he had forgotten how to rule his subjects fairly, while they in turn had failed to provide him and his son with good service and advice.

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<sup>120</sup> Fredegar, iv.68: '*Sed, ut habit gentiletas et superbia prauorum, nihil a Samone que sui admiserant est emendatum, nisi tantum placeta uellens instetuer, de hys et alies intencionibus que inter partes orde fuerant, iustitia redderetur in inuicem.*'

<sup>121</sup> Fredegar, iv.68: '*Non est possebelem ut christiani et Dei serui cum canebus amicicias conlocare possint.*'

<sup>122</sup> Fredegar, iv.68: '*Si uos estis Dei serui et nos Dei canes, dum uos adsiduae contra ipsum agetis, nos permissum accepimus uos morsebus lacerare.*'

<sup>123</sup> Curta, 'Slavs'.

As with the Saxons, the first Carolingian reference to the Slavs comes from Fredegar's continuator, who reports the 'kings of the Wends and the Frisians' aided Pippin III against the Saxons.<sup>124</sup> It is probably telling this is same Slavic group mentioned by Fredegar, and the author of *AMP* instead referred to 'the leaders of the savage people of the Slavs',<sup>125</sup> implying some contact had been maintained between Franks and Wends, and the Franks still saw an equivalence between 'Wends' and 'Slavs'. While the Wends are absent from subsequent reports, the early Carolingian authors followed Fredegar in presenting the Slavs ambiguously, although unlike Fredegar they never presented anything like the Slavic perspective we glimpse in the exchange between Sicharius and Samo. Rather than presenting the Slavs as a unified, homogenous group prone to treachery, Carolingian authors were keen to highlight the distinct Slavic sub-groups that existed. This was because during the eighth century the Slavs were not subjected to the long, intense war of conquest the Frankish wars against the Saxons became under Charlemagne. Instead, the Franks had varied diplomatic relations with different Slavic groups, and so these groups could occupy different places in the narratives without the need to rely on a generalised characterisation. As a result, we never hear of 'the Slavs' rebelling *iterum* and *solito more* in the same way as the Saxons. In fact, 'the Slavs' only emerge as a group composed of smaller sub-groups.

Unlike in the cases of both the Franks and the Saxons, where we hear of actions on the part of these overarching groups and the smaller sub-groups of which they were composed, we never hear of 'the Slavs' undertaking combined actions, and the term is only used to explain a specific sub-group is Slavic. For example, in 789 Charlemagne 'marched into the regions of the Slavs who are called Wilzi... and, with the Lord's bounty, set the aforesaid Slavs beneath his rule'.<sup>126</sup> With him in this march were Franks, Saxons and Frisians, as well as 'the Slavs known as Sorbs and also the Obodrites, whose leader was Witzan'.<sup>127</sup> The reviser expanded on this account to explain a little more about the Wilzi:

A certain nation of the Slavs is in Germania, living on the shore of the ocean, which in its own language is called the Welatabi, but by the Franks is calls the Wilzi. They

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<sup>124</sup> *Continuationes*, 31.

<sup>125</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 748.

<sup>126</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 789: '*Inde iter per motum partibus Sclavaniae, quorum vocabulum est Wilze... Exinde promotus in ante, Domino largiente supradictos Sclavos sub suo dominio conlocavit.*'

<sup>127</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 789: '*Et fuerant cum eo in eodem exercitu Franci, Saxones; Frisiones autem navigio... ad eum coniuverunt. Fuerunt etiam Sclavi cum eo, quorum vocabula sunt Suurbi, nec non et Abotriti, quorum princeps fuit Witzan.*'

have always been hostile to the Franks and their neighbours, who had either been subjected to or allied with the Franks, and were in the habit of pursuing them with hatred and overwhelming and provoking them with war.<sup>128</sup>

The reviser also added to the account of the Nordliudi rebellion of 798 to explain the rebels targeted the Obodrites, who ‘were always allies of the Franks’.<sup>129</sup>

In this way, the Franks made no grand claim to be rulers over the Slavs as they claimed to be over the Saxons and other peripheral peoples, and the status of individual Slavic groups as either allies or enemies is acknowledged. The relationship between Franks and Slavs, then, is dominated by alliances, rather than attempts to integrate the Slavs into the Carolingian community. It is probably for this reason we hear nothing in the annals of Slavic paganism or of the kind of mass-baptisms which accompanied victories over the Saxons. Whereas the Saxons were supposed to be part of the *regnum Francorum*, so their paganism was unacceptable, the Slavs were simply allies, so their religion was neither as problematic nor as important. This may be similar to the attitude taken towards the Muslims and their religion. We should still see the Slavs as part of the discourse of otherness, though, precisely because the different Slavic groups were treated differently. As they had done for Fredegar, then, the Slavs provided a way for early Carolingian authors to discuss the nature of the relationship between Franks and peripheral peoples in an ambivalent way, and certainly more ambiguously than they were willing to discuss the Saxons.

### 2.3.3 The Lombards and the Papacy

Like the other peoples already considered here (with the exception of the Muslims), the Lombards had a long history of interactions with the Franks by the eighth century. Yet the Lombards differed in some important ways from other peoples conquered by the Carolingians. Perhaps the most important of these was they had their own kings and kingdom, and in this sense were more like equals of the Franks. Indeed, there is no evidence to suggest the Carolingians saw the Lombards as a

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<sup>128</sup> Revised ARF, s.a. 789: ‘*Natio quaedam Sclavenorum est in Germania, sedens super litus oceani, quae propria lingua Welatabi, francica autem Wiltzi vocatur. Ea Francis semper inimica et vicinos suos, qui Francis vel subiecti vel foederati erant, odiis insectari belloque premere ac lacessere solebat.*’

<sup>129</sup> Revised ARF, s.a. 798: ‘*Nam Abodriti auxiliares Francorum semper fuerunt, ex quo semel ab eis in societatem recepti sunt.*’

subject people before Charlemagne's conquest of the kingdom in 774,<sup>130</sup> despite the attempts by Merovingian kings to reduce the Lombards to tributary status. In fact, the Lombards do not fit neatly into the discourse of rebellion applied to other peoples, although they are at times still accused of acting treacherously, so there are parallels with the portrayals of other peoples. Because of their equal standing with the Franks, the Lombards had a more complex relationship with them, and it may be for this reason they were not subjected to the same kind of systematic denunciation. Likewise, the Lombards were not the targets of long periods of conquest like the Aquitanians or Saxons, and so they do not receive the same level of attention from the Frankish authors as these peoples, or as *dux* Tassilo of Bavaria, to whom we shall turn shortly. Of course, Charlemagne's conquest of the Lombard kingdom and acquisition of the title *rex Langobardorum* made rebellious and treacherous actions on the part of Lombard *duces* clearer, but there is still a paucity of information about such actions in the Frankish sources.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, we learn more about the Lombards from the papal sources of the eighth century, specifically the *Liber Pontificalis* – a collection of *Lives* of the popes – and the letters sent by successive popes to the Carolingians, collected in the *Codex Carolinus* by Charlemagne in 791.<sup>131</sup> From a non-papal perspective, there is also the most comprehensive source to deal with the Lombard kingdom, Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum*, written c.787-96, but this narrative ends with the death of King Liutprand in 744 and so does not cover most of the events relevant to our study.<sup>132</sup> It is worth bearing in mind, all these sources circulated in Francia, and so the information found in them was available to the audience of the annals. There are some similar sentiments regarding the Lombards in the papal sources, for example the idea the Lombards were treacherous oath-breakers. But generally speaking the popes and their authors utilised much more explicitly religious language to deal with the Lombards than did the Frankish authors. At several points, the Lombards appear as heretics, or perhaps even pagans

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<sup>130</sup> On which, see McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 107-14.

<sup>131</sup> *Codex Carolinus*, ed. W. Gundlach, *MGH Epistolae Merowingici et Karolini aevi*, 1 (Berlin, 1892). The title is a modern invention. On the *Codex*, see D. van Espelo, 'A Testimony of Carolingian Rule? The *Codex epistolaris carolinus*, its Historical Context, and the Meaning of *imperium*', *Early Medieval Europe*, 21 (2013) 254-82.

<sup>132</sup> On the *Historia*, see W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History: Jordanes, Bede, Gregory of Tours and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 329-431; W. Pohl, 'Paulus Diaconus und die *Historia Langobardorum*: Text und Tradition', in A. Scharer and G. Scheibelreiter (Vienna, 1994), pp. 375-405.

– depictions which owed little to the religious realities of the eighth century, but much to the papal need for Frankish support.<sup>133</sup> This was a discourse described by Walter Pohl as ‘Machtpolitik ohne Waffen’ – ‘power politics without weapons’.<sup>134</sup> At the same time, these sources mention matters which would have been highly relevant to a Frankish audience, particularly regarding the events leading up to the conquest of the Lombard kingdom. From a letter of Pope Stephen III we learn of a potential marriage alliance between Charlemagne and Desiderius,<sup>135</sup> while from *Liber Pontificalis* we learn Desiderius was in possession of Charlemagne’s nephews in 773, and apparently intended to have them anointed as Frankish kings.<sup>136</sup> We should, therefore, envision a high level of interplay between the Frankish and papal sources which deal with the Lombards.

The Franks were involved in Italian affairs intermittently during the sixth century: Theudebert I invaded the peninsula as an ally of Emperor Justinian I during the latter’s Gothic Wars, but used the opportunity to press his own claims in northern Italy.<sup>137</sup> Guntram and Childebert II also made such forays into the peninsula at the behest of Emperor Maurice;<sup>138</sup> these do not seem to have amounted to much despite what we have seen of Fredegar’s claims the kings reduced the Lombards to tributary status.<sup>139</sup> The Franks and Gallic churchmen were also in contact with the Papacy and involved in the theological disputes that wracked the Mediterranean, especially the Three Chapters controversy;<sup>140</sup> particularly notable are letters from Pope Gregory I to Brunhild.<sup>141</sup> There is evidence of such links down to the middle of the seventh century, but after this the Franks seem to have had little contact with either the

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<sup>133</sup> For a survey of the Papacy’s attitudes to its neighbours, see C. Gantner, *Freunde Roms und Völker der Finsternis: Die päpstliche Konstruktion von Anderen im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 2014); the Lombards are covered at pp. 139-243.

<sup>134</sup> W. Pohl, ‘Das Papsttum und die Langobarden’, in M. Becher and J. Jarnut (eds), *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751: Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung* (Münster, 2004), pp. 145-61, at p. 151.

<sup>135</sup> *Codex Carolinus*, 45.

<sup>136</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, ‘Life 97’, 9.

<sup>137</sup> *DLH*, iii.27. See Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 165.

<sup>138</sup> *DLH*, iv.42. See Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 167-8.

<sup>139</sup> See Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 167-8.

<sup>140</sup> I.N. Wood, ‘The Franks and Papal Theology, 550-660’, in C. Chazelle and C. Cubitt, *The Crisis of the Oikoumene: The Three Chapters and the Failed Quest for Unity in the Sixth-Century Mediterranean* (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 223-42.

<sup>141</sup> Gregory I, *Registrum epistolarum*, ed. P. Ewald and L.M. Hartmann, *MGH Epistolae*, 1-2; a particularly revealing selection are *Epp.* viii.4, ix. 213 and xi.46, which show Gregory’s high opinion of Brunhild. See Nelson, ‘Jezebels’, pp. 14-5, 25; Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 130-1.

Lombards or the Papacy until Boniface's visit to Rome in 718 and Charles Martel's alliance with King Liutprand.<sup>142</sup>

The Lombards, meanwhile, entered Italy in the aftermath of Justinian's wars in the peninsula, having already been allies of the Byzantines in the closing phase of the conflict.<sup>143</sup> After a period of war against the Gepids, and under pressure from the Slavs and Avars, they moved into and settled in Italy, making themselves a force to be reckoned with for both the Byzantines and the Papacy. Generally, Byzantium aided the Papacy against Lombard territorial expansion, but c.680 the Byzantines and Lombards concluded a peace treaty, and by the beginning of the eighth century imperial influence in the peninsula was weakening.<sup>144</sup> It is in this context we can turn to the relations of both Lombards and Papacy with the Carolingians.<sup>145</sup>

In 739-40, lacking support from the emperor, and facing renewed hostilities from the Lombard King Liutprand, Pope Gregory III wrote two letters to Charles Martel asking for aid.<sup>146</sup> This is the first record of any contact between the Papacy and the Carolingians, and compared to later efforts, Gregory's words are remarkably objective.<sup>147</sup> In time the relationship would become crucial – politically and ideologically – to both powers, but for now Gregory simply accused Liutprand and his nephew and sub-king Hildebrand of lying to Charles about their intentions.<sup>148</sup> From the Frankish side, both Fredegar's continuator and the *AMP*-author record embassies from Gregory to Charles, although these embassies are not clearly contextualised. The continuator simply says the pope proposed an agreement whereby he would abandon the emperor and side with Charles.<sup>149</sup> The *AMP*-author

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<sup>142</sup> Although for what contacts did occur in this period, see I.N. Wood, 'Between Rome and Jarrow: Papal Relations with Francia and England, from 597-716', *Settimane di Studio*, 61, *Chiese locali e chiese regionali nell'alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 2014), pp. 297-320.

<sup>143</sup> The most comprehensive survey of the history of the Lombard kingdom in Anglophone literature remains T. Hodgkin, *Italy and Her Invaders*, 8 vols (Oxford, 1895), vols 5-6. Briefer overviews of the period may be found in D. Bullough, 'Germanic Italy: The Ostrogothic and Lombard Kingdoms', in D.T. Rice, *The Dark Ages: The Making of European Civilization* (London, 1965), pp. 157-74, at pp. 171-4; C. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society 400-1000* (London, 1981), pp. 28-47.

<sup>144</sup> T.F.X. Noble, *The Republic of St Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825* (Philadelphia, 1984), pp. 1-14.

<sup>145</sup> For a general overview, see Noble, *Republic*.

<sup>146</sup> *Codex Carolinus*, 1-2.

<sup>147</sup> See Gantner, *Freunde Roms*, pp. 144-5.

<sup>148</sup> *Codex Carolinus*, 2: 'Non credas, fili, falsidicis suggestionibus ac suasionibus eorundem regum. Omnia enim false tibi suggerunt, scribentes circumventiones.'

<sup>149</sup> *Continuationes*, 22.



makes the pope's need for aid clearer, stating the people of Rome had been abandoned by the emperor, but not adding why aid was needed.<sup>150</sup>

But Gregory's requests probably had more significance for these later authors than they did for Charles, and the pope was probably fighting a lost cause in trying to recruit Charles, who at this time was on good terms with the Lombards. According to Paul the Deacon, Charles had sent his son Pippin to be symbolically adopted and have his hair cut by King Liutprand, while Liutprand provided assistance to Charles Martel in his campaigns against the Muslims in 737.<sup>151</sup> Nevertheless, Pippin himself took a rather different stance towards the Lombards after becoming king of the Franks. Since Liutprand's successors were not his relatives, we should not necessarily expect Pippin to have felt any loyalty to his Lombard peers. At the same time, he found his own use for papal backing: support of his newly acquired royal title.

In 753, after a series of careful negotiations, Pope Stephen II came to Francia to seek Pippin's support against the Lombard King Aistulf, in return for which the pope anointed the new king.<sup>152</sup> This agreement between pope and king marked the beginning of hostilities between Franks and Lombards, during which Pippin presented himself as a mediator, albeit an aggressive one, clearly aligned with Rome. King Aistulf becomes the antagonist of Pippin and the Franks in subsequent passages of the sources, and is shown consistently disrespecting both the king of the Franks and the pope, and breaking the agreements he had made with them. In all the sources Pippin responds to Stephen's call for aid by marching into Italy to seek justice, which Aistulf rejects.<sup>153</sup> Pippin triumphs over Aistulf with the aid of God

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<sup>150</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 741.

<sup>151</sup> Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, vi.53-4. Note, Paul makes two campaigns in southern Gaul out of what appears as a single campaign in the Frankish sources. J. Jarnut, 'Die Adoption Pippins durch König Liutprand und die Italienpolitik Karl Martells', in J. Jarnut, U. Nonn and M. Richter (eds), *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit* (Sigmaringen, 1994), pp. 217-26, provides a good overview of Charles Martel's policy with regard to the Lombards and the Papacy, but perhaps goes too far in suggesting Liutprand's adoption of Pippin was meant as a step towards the taking of the Frankish throne (pp. 219-20). On the ritual haircutting, or *barbatoria*, see Hen, *Culture*, pp. 137-43; R. Bartlett, 'Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Sixth Series*, 4 (1994), 43-60; Diesenberger, 'Hair'.

<sup>152</sup> *Continuationes*, 36; *ARF* and Revised *ARF* s.a. 753; *AMP*, s.a. 753. For the negotiations and the coronation from the papal perspective, see *Liber Pontificalis*, 'Life 94', 15-30. On the development of the relationship between Pippin and Stephen, see Gantner, *Freunde Roms*, pp. 154-64.

<sup>153</sup> *Continuationes*, 36; *ARF*, s.a. 755; *AMP*, s.a. 754.

and intercession of St Peter, but the Lombard king later breaks the faith he had promised to Pippin and once again Pippin is forced to march against him.<sup>154</sup>

Aistulf is described as arrogant (*superbus*)<sup>155</sup> and impious (*nefandus*),<sup>156</sup> a clear contrast with Pippin, and his death comes as a result of divine judgment (*diuino iudico*),<sup>157</sup> the judgement of God (*iudico Dei*)<sup>158</sup> or divine vengeance (*divina ultione*)<sup>159</sup> which saw him thrown from his horse while hunting. Some accusations are hurled at the Lombards; Fredegar's continuator says Pope Stephen wanted to be free 'from deceitfulness and oppression at their hands',<sup>160</sup> while the *AMP*-author says Stephen 'came... to protest the trouble of the Lombards'.<sup>161</sup> In general, though, this is a denunciation of Aistulf personally, which fits with the way other peripheral peoples were treated: negative actions were blamed on leaders. Similar accusations are hurled at Aistulf in the papal sources. We have five letters from Stephen to Pippin written after the agreements of 754.<sup>162</sup> These accuse Aistulf of hostility and impiety, and are steeped in Biblical and religious language. Particularly revealing is the letter in which Stephen accuses Aistulf and the Lombards of doing more damage to Rome than any pagan people, so even the stones of the city weep.<sup>163</sup> *Liber Pontificalis* goes to even greater extremes. Here Aistulf is accused of swearing false oaths (*periurium*), which tallies with the Frankish portrayal, but his actions are called a persecution, implying they were as much religious as territorial, and he is influenced by the Devil.<sup>164</sup> The Lombards are also described as a *nefanda gens* – an impious people.<sup>165</sup> This is the first time the Lombards as a whole had suffered such general accusations since the time of Gregory the Great, and the author places Stephen's appeal to Pippin clearly within the tradition of the appeals made by

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<sup>154</sup> *Continuationes*, 36; *ARF*, s.a. 756; *AMP*, s.a. 755.

<sup>155</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 753.

<sup>156</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 756.

<sup>157</sup> *Continuationes*, 39.

<sup>158</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 756.

<sup>159</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 756.

<sup>160</sup> *Continuationes*, 36: 'ut per eius adiutorium eorum oppressionibus uel fraudulentia de manibus eorum liberaret.'

<sup>161</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 753: 'molestiam Langobardorum... querendam veniebat.'

<sup>162</sup> *Codex Carolinus*, 6-10.

<sup>163</sup> *Codex Carolinus*, 8: 'Et tanta mala in hac Romana provincia fecerunt, quanta certe nec pagane gentes aliquando perpetrare sunt, quia etiam, si dici potest, et ipsi lapides, nostras dissolutiones videntes, ululant nobiscum.' See Gantner, *Freunde Roms*, pp. 162-3.

<sup>164</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, 'Life 94', 5-6.

<sup>165</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, 'Life 94', 16.

Gregory III and Zacharias. Just as the Franks with the Saxons, in this instance it suited a papal author to depict the Lombards as an undifferentiated whole.<sup>166</sup>

When Aistulf died suddenly in 757, Pippin actually became involved in the election of the next king. This appears a relatively simple matter in the accounts of Fredegar's continuator and the *AMP*-author: Aistulf dies and Pippin oversees the appointment of his successor, Desiderius.<sup>167</sup> What they leave out, perhaps in order to emphasise the consensus of Frankish king, pope and Lombards, and what we only learn of from *Liber Pontificalis* is Ratchis – Aistulf's brother and predecessor as king before his monastic retirement in 749 – had attempted to seize the throne.<sup>168</sup> According to the papal version of events, Pippin was called in to support Desiderius against Ratchis, presumably because the pope feared a resumption of the hostile policies pursued by Aistulf and Ratchis, whereas Desiderius seemed a more pliable candidate for the throne.<sup>169</sup> Despite Ratchis's attempt to take the throne, Desiderius's eventual succession is still presented as taking place with the consent of the pope, Pippin and all the Lombards, although understandably here Stephen has the position of prime authority in bringing about peace.<sup>170</sup>

With the installation of Desiderius, Frankish authors lose interest in Italy, and the *Liber Pontificalis* is both brief and vague about Stephen II's successor Paul. The 760s were a bad time for the Papacy, which faced hostility from the Lombards and Byzantium, with Pippin too concerned with matters in Aquitaine to answer Paul's calls for help. Matters are particularly murky for the years of the joint rule of Charlemagne and Carloman,<sup>171</sup> but the relationship between the three powers seems to have been on the verge of altering radically, perhaps because authority in the *regnum Francorum* was now divided. Relations between the Charlemagne and Carloman during their brief joint-rule over Francia have been seen as cool at best if not outright hostile,<sup>172</sup> and Charlemagne's decision in 770 to marry a daughter of Desiderius may have been part of this poor relationship. Carloman himself was

<sup>166</sup> See Gantner, *Freunde Roms*, pp. 158-9.

<sup>167</sup> *Continuationes*, 39; *AMP*, s.a. 756.

<sup>168</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, 'Life 94', 48-51.

<sup>169</sup> On Ratchis, see Davis, *Eighth-Century Popes*, pp. 72-3, n. 110.

<sup>170</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, 'Life 94', 50-1.

<sup>171</sup> On the period of joint rule, see McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 75-88.

<sup>172</sup> See, for example, J. Jarnut, 'Ein Bruderkampf und seine Folgen: die Krise des Frankenreiches (768-771)', in G. Jenal and S. Haarländer (eds), *Herrschaft, Kirche, Kultur: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart, 1993), pp. 165-76.

already married to a woman named Gerberga, probably of a noble Frankish – or possibly Alamannian – family, while Charlemagne had had at least a liaison with Himiltrude, the mother of his eldest son, Pippin ‘the Hunchback’:<sup>173</sup> when Pope Stephen III wrote to the brothers, he believed both had been promised to noble, Frankish women by their father.<sup>174</sup>

Given two of Desiderius’s daughters were already married to Tassilo III of Bavaria and the *dux* of Benevento respectively, Charlemagne’s decision to marry another of the Lombard king’s daughters may have been part of a grand alliance against Carloman and, possibly, the Papacy.<sup>175</sup> Like his father in 753, Charlemagne was clearly not worried about maintaining a consistent Frankish policy with regard to Italy. We do not learn much of this from the Frankish sources, though. Einhard only mentions Charlemagne’s repudiation of a daughter of Desiderius ‘*post annum*’,<sup>176</sup> and of the annals, only *Annales Mosellani* – one of the sets of minor annals – mention Pippin’s widow Bertrada return from Italy with a daughter of Desiderius, a point on which they do not elaborate further.<sup>177</sup> We do not know the name of this woman Charlemagne intended to marry,<sup>178</sup> nor, despite Einhard’s claims, whether they actually wed, and Pope Stephen does not even seem to have known which of the brothers was marrying her. Rosamond McKitterick has even cast doubts on the traditional idea of troubled relations between the royal brothers,<sup>179</sup> although the decision of Carloman’s wife to flee to Desiderius after her husband’s death is surely telling.<sup>180</sup>

Whatever difficulties we have unravelling the diplomacy between the three powers in this period, though, the proposed Franco-Lombard marriage alliance was the trigger for one of the most openly hostile anti-Lombard pieces of rhetoric to

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<sup>173</sup> On whom, see Nelson, ‘Charlemagne – *pater optimus*?’, in P. Godman, J. Jarnut and P. Johanek (eds), *Am Vorabend der Kaiserkrönung: Das Epos Karolus Magnus et Leo papa und der Papstbesuch in Paderborn 799* (Berlin, 2002), pp. 269-81, at pp. 276-8.

<sup>174</sup> *Codex Carolinus*, 45.

<sup>175</sup> Nelson, ‘Making a Difference in Eighth Century Politics: The Daughters of Desiderius’, in A.C. Murray, *After Rome’s Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History* (Toronto, 1998), pp. 171-190, at p. 181; Pohl, ‘*Alienigena coniugia*: Bestrebungen zu einem Verbot auswärtiger Heiraten in der Karolingerzeit’, in A. Pečar and K. Trampedach (eds), *Die Bibel als politisches Argument* (München, 2007), pp. 159-88, at pp. 165-6.

<sup>176</sup> *Vita Karoli*, 18.

<sup>177</sup> *Annales Mosellani*, ed. C. Lappenberg, *MGH SS*, 16 (Hanover, 1859), s.a. 770.

<sup>178</sup> For the modern notion her name was Gerberga, like Carloman’s wife, see Nelson, ‘Making a Difference’, p. 183.

<sup>179</sup> McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 79-81.

<sup>180</sup> Gantner, *Freunde Roms*, p. 172. As McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 87-8 points out, this flight is not enough to support the suggestion it was actually Carloman who had married Desiderius’s daughter.

come from the Papacy during this period; a letter to the royal brothers from the pope on the topic of marriages between different peoples aimed at discouraging them from entering a marriage alliance against the Papacy.<sup>181</sup> Stephen began his letter in quite general terms as a warning against ‘foreign’ marriages. For his discouragement, he relied on Biblical precedent and the idea Israelites marrying women from other races went against God’s commandments, even if the Old Testament as a whole is ambiguous on this point.<sup>182</sup> Indeed, Stephen’s point must be inferred, since no specific Biblical reference is given.<sup>183</sup>

But the pope went on to speak of the Lombards specifically, and to hit closer to home. He refers to the royal brothers as ‘most distinguished sons, great kings’ and to the Franks as ‘an illustrious people, which shines forth over other peoples’.<sup>184</sup> The Lombards, meanwhile, are ‘a faithless and most foul-smelling race... which is reckoned among those from which arose the nation and offspring of lepers’.<sup>185</sup> Throughout this passage, the pope stresses the threat of pollution to the Franks if Charlemagne goes through with this marriage, and ends by quoting Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians: ‘What is the connection between light and darkness? What is shared between the faithful and the unfaithful?’<sup>186</sup> This emphasises the idea of the ‘faithless’ Lombards, and together with everything else, seems to be an attempt to paint them as heretics, if not pagans, a notion which owes far more to Gregory the Great than the eighth century, when the Lombards had been orthodox Christians for at least a century.<sup>187</sup>

In 773 we have a sudden renewed interest in Italian matters from the Frankish sources, when they report what appears, at first sight, to be a repeat of the events of twenty years earlier. Emissaries come from Pope Hadrian I asking for aid against Desiderius and the Lombards;<sup>188</sup> the reviser of *ARF* adds Hadrian ‘was no longer

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<sup>181</sup> *Codex Carolinus*, 45.

<sup>182</sup> Pohl, ‘*Alienigenae coniugia*’, pp. 161-5.

<sup>183</sup> *Codex Carolinus*, 45; Pohl, ‘*Alienigenae coniugia*’, p.170.

<sup>184</sup> *Codex Carolinus*, 45: ‘*praecellentissimi filii, magni reges... praeclara Francorum gens, quae super omnes gentes enitet.*’

<sup>185</sup> *Codex Carolinus*, 45: ‘*perfidae ac foetentissimae Langobardorum genti... quae in numero gentium nequaquam computatur, de cuius natione et leprosum genus oriri certum est.*’

<sup>186</sup> 2 Cor., vi.14-15.

<sup>187</sup> Pohl, ‘*Alienigenae coniugia*’, p. 171. On the difficulty of tracing Lombard religious alignments, see W. Pohl, ‘Deliberate ambiguity: The Lombards and Christianity’, in G. Armstrong and I.N. Wood (eds), *Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals* (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 47-58.

<sup>188</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 773; *AMP*, s.a. 773.

able to bear the haughtiness of Desiderius and the oppression of the Lombards'.<sup>189</sup> The *AMP*-author was eager to draw connections with earlier events, describing Desiderius as arrogant, just like Aistulf, and claiming 'Hadrian's predecessor Pope Stephen of blessed memory had appointed Charles king and patrician of the Romans, anointing him with sacred unction',<sup>190</sup> a reference to Charles's participation in the ceremony of 754.<sup>191</sup> The Frankish authors are studiously vague here, though. There are no explicit accusations of treachery on the part of Desiderius, and they do not mention one reason in particular Charlemagne would have had for marching against him: Carloman's wife had fled to Desiderius's court with their sons, and now the Lombard king was attempting to have them anointed kings of the Franks by the pope.<sup>192</sup> But once again a Frankish king becomes the defender of the rights of St Peter and marches into Italy to restore order, triumphing with aid of God and intercession of the saint.<sup>193</sup> This time, though, the campaign ends rather differently:

Returning from the city of Rome with the help of God and the intercessions of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul for the glorious King Charles, he came to Pavia and captured that city and he subjugated King Desiderius with his wife and daughter and with all the treasure of his kingdom to his power. And coming there from all the cities of Italy, the Lombards placed themselves under the dominion and control of the glorious King Charles.<sup>194</sup>

But the Frankish sources have surprisingly little to say about such a major event in the history of the *regnum*. Compared to the other conquests undertaken by the Carolingians in the eighth century – none of which resulted in the acquisition of royal titles – this appears almost as a 'non-event',<sup>195</sup> Charlemagne simply marches into Italy, takes over the Lombard kingdom, and marches home. There is no long, drawn out campaign as there would be in Saxony and no years of rivalry with hostile

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<sup>189</sup> Revised *ARF*, s.a. 773: '*Adriana papa... insolentiam Desiderii regis et Langobardorum oppressionem ferre non posset.*'

<sup>190</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 773: '*illum predecessor suus beatae memoriae Stephanus papa unctione sacra liniens in regem ac patricium Romanorum ordinarat.*'

<sup>191</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 753; see *Continuationes*, 36, where the young Charlemagne accompanies Stephen into his father's presence.

<sup>192</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, 'Life 97', 9. See McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, p. 87; Gantner, *Freunde Roms*, pp. 191-2.

<sup>193</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 773; *AMP*, s.a. 773.

<sup>194</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 774: '*Revertente cum Dei auxilio, intercedentibus beatis apostolis Petro et Paulo glorioso Carolo rege a Romana urbe, ad Papiam venit ipsamque civitatem cepit et Desiderium regem cum uxore et filia et cum omni thesauro regni sui suae ditioni subegit. Ibiq[ue] venientes undique Langobardi de singulis civitatibus Italiae subdiderunt se dominio et regimini gloriosi regis Caroli.*'

<sup>195</sup> The phrase used by S. Gasparri, 'The Fall of the Lombard Kingdom: Facts, Memory and Propaganda', in S. Gasparri (ed.), 774. *Ipotesi per una transizione* (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 41-65, at p. 42.

leaders, as there had been in Aquitaine. Perhaps this is why the Frankish authors presented the conquest of the Lombard kingdom so simply; because compared to these other campaigns, it had been simple. Part of this simplicity may have been realised through the ‘elective’ nature of the Lombard monarchy because enough of the nobility sided with Charlemagne and the pope to make Desiderius’s deposition and Charlemagne’s election as *rex Langobardorum* official.

In fact, while we hear more of Aistulf than of Desiderius, the Frankish authors had even treated the earlier hostility only briefly compared to others, and the same can be said of other Italian affairs after the conquest: they are mentioned, but always overshadowed by other matters. In 775-6, Hrodgaud, *dux* of Friuli, led a rebellion against the new Frankish regime.<sup>196</sup> This is portrayed in a way that fits with the general discourse of rebellion. Charlemagne hears ‘the Lombard Hrodgard had violated his faith, broken all his oaths and wished all Italy to rebel’,<sup>197</sup> just as other rebellious leaders acted in their respective regions. But here, Charlemagne marches into Italy, Hrodgaud is killed, and that is the end of the matter, which is bookmarked and completely overshadowed by Saxon rebellions in 775 and 776: these rebellions received far lengthier treatment than Hrodgaud’s.<sup>198</sup> The simplicity of the Frankish account is in contrast with the papal letters, in which we learn the rebellion also involved the *duces* of Benevento and Chiusi, and which suggest Hrodgaud may not even have been their leader; most of Pope Hadrian’s ire is targeted at Hildeprand of Spoleto.<sup>199</sup>

The same can be said of other important events in Charlemagne’s rule of the peninsula. In 781 he made his son Pippin (formerly Carloman) king of Italy, a vital delegation of power even if Pippin was still a child at the time.<sup>200</sup> But here the *ARF*-author has more to say about the envoys sent by Hadrian to Tassilo of Bavaria, warning him to remember his oaths to Pippin III. Likewise, we learn in 786 Charlemagne attempted to consolidate his rule over the Lombard kingdom further

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<sup>196</sup> See H. Krahwinkler, *Friaul im Frühmittelalter: Geschichte einer Region vom Ende des fünften bis zum Ende des zehnten Jahrhunderts* (Vienna, 1992), pp. 119-43.

<sup>197</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 775: ‘*Tunc audiens, quod Hrodgaudus Langobardus fraudavit fidem suam et omnia sacramenta rumpens et voluit Italiam rebellare, tunc illis in partibus cum aliquibus Francis dominus Carolus rex iter peragens.*’

<sup>198</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 775-6.

<sup>199</sup> *Codex Carolinus*, 57, although Hadrian may simply have been insinuating Hildeprand, an otherwise loyal subject of Charlemagne, into the rebellion for his own ends; see Davis, *Eighth-Century Popes*, p. 111.

<sup>200</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 781.

by conquering Benevento, which had remained semi-independent after the conquest. We learn of the Frankish and papal distrust of *dux* Arechis and of his submission to Frankish authority,<sup>201</sup> but once more the annalist has far more to say about the escalating situation with Tassilo and Bavaria.<sup>202</sup> Finally, we hear very briefly of a war fought by an alliance of Lombards and Franks against the Byzantines in 788, but this too is simply a sideshow compared to the Avar invasions supposedly instigated by Tassilo, although these admittedly were targeted at Italy as well as Bavaria.<sup>203</sup> There are further references to Lombard involvement in the Carolingian community, for example *dux* Eric of Friuli's participation in the campaign against the Avars in 796,<sup>204</sup> but generally speaking we hear little of Italy or the Lombards in the early Carolingian sources. We might expect more from Einhard, reflecting on Charlemagne's rule and achievements as a whole and with a great deal of hindsight, but even this author brushes over Italian affairs, spending as long discussing the precedent of Pippin III's campaigns against Aistulf as Charlemagne's conquest, and then compacting Hrodgaud's rebellion and the installation of Pippin as king of Italy into the same section of narrative before turning to his lengthy account of the Saxon Wars.<sup>205</sup>

Perhaps we should not be surprised by this attitude on the part of the Frankish authors, or by the fact more of our information on Lombard matters – such as it is – comes from papal sources. Other regions and peoples were, or could be, shown as part of the *regnum Francorum*, but there existed south of the Alps a *regnum Langobardorum*, and so we are implicitly dealing with the relationship between two kingdoms, rather than that between the rulers and subjects of a single kingdom; in other words, we are dealing with two different communities. In this sense, the Lombards were peripheral in a different way to other peoples because, rather than inhabiting the border regions of the *regnum Francorum*, they were beyond its borders.

For the Papacy, on the other hand, the Lombards were a direct threat, or at least were perceived to be. The popes had built up significant land-holdings in the peninsula during the turbulent political situations of the sixth and seventh centuries,

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<sup>201</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 786-7.

<sup>202</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 787-8.

<sup>203</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 788.

<sup>204</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 796. See Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 148-58.

<sup>205</sup> *Vita Karoli*, 6.



and while both the Lombard kingdom and the Byzantine Empire could threaten these holdings, the more immediate threat came from the Lombards. When the popes had to turn north of the Alps for aid, they did so using the best weapon at their disposal: religious denunciation. But even the extreme depictions of the Lombards found in some of the papal sources should be seen as products of the specific contexts in which they were created, because the Papacy and Lombards were not in a constant state of hostility during the eighth century: there were periods of peace and compromise.<sup>206</sup>

Nevertheless, we should not understate what the Papacy and the Carolingians gained from the alliance begun by Pippin III and Stephen II. The popes gained a source of military support, although it was not always to be relied upon, and a boost to their spiritual standing as the centre of Christianity. The Frankish rulers meanwhile gained prestige for their nascent royal dynasty. The alliance certainly contributed to the conception of the Carolingian community as a Christian community on two levels, by adding a sacral element to Pippin's kingship through his papal anointing and by creating the idea of the Carolingians as the defenders of St Peter, an idea on which Frankish authors were keen to draw. But even in the years after Charlemagne's conquest of the Lombard kingdom and acquisition of the royal title, Lombard matters remained 'peripheral' to accounts about the Franks and their rulers.

### **2.3.4 Grifo and Tassilo: Frankish rebels and peripheral leadership**

Nowhere can the ambiguity of the interplay between community and otherness be seen more clearly than in depictions of those incidents in which members of the Carolingian dynasty went to war with one another. Such incidents threatened the ideal of Frankish unity, leading authors to denounce members of the very dynasty they sought to glorify. To do this, they played on the inherent association between rebellion and the peripheral peoples. The first such incident was the dispute after Charles Martel's death between Pippin III and Carloman, the sons of his first wife Rotrude, and Grifo, the son of his second wife Swanhild.<sup>207</sup> The second was that

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<sup>206</sup> Nelson, 'Making a Difference', p. 178-9.

<sup>207</sup> R. Collins, 'Pippin III as Mayor of the Palace: the Evidence', in M. Becher and J. Jarnut (eds), *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751: Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung* (Münster, 2004), pp. 75-91; S. Airlie, 'Towards a Carolingian Aristocracy', in M. Becher and J. Jarnut (eds), *Der*

between Charlemagne and his cousin Tassilo over Frankish authority in Bavaria in the late 780s.<sup>208</sup> In each of these cases the losers – Grifo and Tassilo respectively – were as much legitimate Carolingians as their rivals, but in each case the authors who wrote about them downplayed their Frankishness while simultaneously emphasising their connections with the non-Franks on the peripheries. Let us begin by briefly considering the career of Grifo and its presentations in the sources before doing the same for Tassilo and then comparing these presentations to see what they tell us about the connection between rebellion and peripheral leadership.

Grifo was the son of Charles Martel by his second wife, the Bavarian Swanhild. Although Grifo was significantly younger than his half-brothers Carloman and Pippin, it seems likely their father intended for him to inherit an equal share of the kingdom, probably consisting parts of Neustria, Austrasia and Burgundy.<sup>209</sup> In fact, despite what later authors claimed, Grifo came close to wielding real power in the Frankish kingdom, as shown by a letter he received from Boniface which addresses him as an equal of his older brothers and shows his intended sphere of influence included Thuringia.<sup>210</sup> Instead of sharing power, though, Pippin and Carloman seem to have objected to the tripartite division, turning on Grifo and imprisoning him in Neufchâteau, where he remained until shortly after Carloman's retirement in 747.

Despite two apparent attempts by Pippin to make peace, Grifo spent the remainder of his life at war with or fleeing from his brother. His activities must be reconstructed from sources hostile to him, although the essence of their reports about him is probably accurate, even if their interpretations of his motives are coloured by hindsight. After being released by Pippin in 747, Grifo first attempted to make an alliance with the Saxons. When this failed, he moved into Bavaria, attempting to set himself up as the successor of his relative, *dux* Odilo. Pippin interfered to prevent this, and to ensure the succession of Odilo's son, Tassilo.

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*Dynastiewechsel von 751: Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung* (Münster, 2004), pp. 109-27. On the presentation of Grifo in the sources, see Goosmann, *Memorable Crises*, pp. 91-123.

<sup>208</sup> S. Airlie, 'Narratives of Triumph and Rituals of Submission: Charlemagne's Mastering of Bavaria', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Series IV, 9 (1999), 93-119.

<sup>209</sup> AMP, 741. M. Becher, 'Eine verschleierte Krise: Die Nachfolge Karl Martells 741 und die Anfänge der karolingischen Hofgeschichtsschreibung', in J. Laudage (ed.) *Von Fakten und Fiktionen. Mittelalterliche Geschichtsdarstellungen und ihre kritische Aufarbeitung* (Köln, 2003), pp. 95-134 probably goes too far in claiming Charles intended for Grifo to be his sole heir; see Goosmann, *Memorable Crises*, p. 93.

<sup>210</sup> Boniface, *Epistolae*, ed. M. Tangl, *MGH Epistolae selectae*, 1 (Berlin, 1916), 48.

Subsequently, Grifo allied himself to Waifar of Aquitaine, and eventually attempted to make for the Lombard kingdom, but was killed while crossing the Alps in 753.

We learn surprisingly little about Grifo from Fredegar's continuator, who only reports his death.<sup>211</sup> This author's silence was probably a result of his desire to present both a smooth transition from Charles Martel to his sons, and to present the Carolingians and their Frankish subjects as united. As with Childeric III, then, it seems he preferred to ignore a divisive character rather than attempt to deal with the implications of his actions. By the turn of the ninth century, though, we can see a growing interest in Grifo. The *ARF*-author maintains silence about Grifo's role in the succession of Charles Martel, but mentions the later alliance with the Saxons and involvement in Bavaria, probably in order to clarify the reasons for Pippin's support of Tassilo, which, as we shall see, was central to the author's denunciation of the Bavarian *dux*. Even so, the author only reports Grifo fled to Saxony in 747,<sup>212</sup> and thence to Bavaria the following year, where his attempt to subdue the region was thwarted by Pippin, who returned him to Neustria and gave him twelve counties to rule.<sup>213</sup> The author also reports Grifo rejecting this position and fleeing to Aquitaine.

We receive a much fuller account of Grifo's career from *AMP* and the Revised *ARF*, although the details of the sources differ. Each provides a longer account of events in Saxony and Bavaria,<sup>214</sup> as well as the crucial information about Grifo's role in the events that followed Charles Martel's death and division of the kingdom. Specifically, we learn Grifo's mother Swanhild had either convinced Charles to alter his division plan in favour of Grifo shortly before his death,<sup>215</sup> or she convinced Grifo to attempt to seize power for himself shortly afterwards.<sup>216</sup> The sources agree, though, Grifo and his mother briefly held the city of Laon before being defeated and imprisoned by Carloman and Pippin.

But why this need or desire to present an audience with a more complete narrative of Grifo's actions fifty years after his death? It may be the increasing strength of the Carolingian dynasty filled its historians with increasing confidence in describing

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<sup>211</sup> *Continuationes*, 35.

<sup>212</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 747.

<sup>213</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 748.

<sup>214</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 748-9; Revised *ARF*, s.a. 747-8.

<sup>215</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 741.

<sup>216</sup> Revised *ARF*, s.a. 741.

their victories over rival leaders.<sup>217</sup> However, we must also consider the impact of Tassilo's actions, which led to a new emphasis on the oaths of loyalty which Charlemagne's subjects had to take,<sup>218</sup> and may also have sparked a renewed interest in the previous family dispute which escalated into fratricidal war.

Tassilo was the son of the Bavarian *dux* Odilo and Charles Martel's daughter Hiltrude, who married around the time of Charles's death: the sources claim the marriage took place after the death. Tassilo was just a child at the time of his father's death, Grifo's attempt to take control of Bavaria and his own installation as *dux* by Pippin.<sup>219</sup> But Tassilo does not appear in the *Continuations*, perhaps because he was not particularly prominent in Frankish politics before the 780s, when he fell prey to the expansive policies of his cousin Charlemagne, who was by then attempting to exert a tighter control over Bavaria.<sup>220</sup> In 788, Tassilo was formally deposed by Charlemagne and entered monastic retirement,<sup>221</sup> though he was brought out at the Synod of Frankfurt in 794 to once more officially renounce his family's claims to rule Bavaria.<sup>222</sup>

Because of these events, which colour their accounts, the *ARF*- and *AMP*-authors have a great deal to say about Tassilo; indeed, his deposition may have been one of the motivations for writing the annals.<sup>223</sup> Thus, in addition to the long entry of 788 about the deposition, we hear of Tassilo promising loyalty to Pippin and his sons in 757.<sup>224</sup> As with Grifo, we should accept the essential truth of such accounts, even if they are hostile to their subject.<sup>225</sup> After all, Tassilo would have entered his majority around this time, and it may have been expected he would confirm his status as a subject of the Frankish king. But the legalistic language used here, reference to Tassilo swearing on saint's relics and the reference to Pippin's sons suggest this specifically prefiguring later events. Another such prefiguring comes in 763, on the eve of Pippin's campaign into Aquitaine of that year, when Tassilo

<sup>217</sup> McKitterick, *History and Memory*, pp. 117-18.

<sup>218</sup> For the relationship between the deposition of Tassilo and the increasing importance of the oaths of loyalty, see M. Becher, *Eid und Herrschaft: Untersuchungen zum Herrscherethos Karls des Grossen* (Sigmaringen, 1993).

<sup>219</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 747-8.

<sup>220</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 781.

<sup>221</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 787-8.

<sup>222</sup> *Council of Frankfurt (794)*, ed. A. Werminghoff, *Concilia aevi Karolini, MGH Conc*, 2, 1 (Hanover and Leipzig, 1906), pp. 165-6.

<sup>223</sup> Becher, *Eid und Herrschaft*, pp. 21-5; Airlie, 'Narratives of Triumph', p. 93.

<sup>224</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 757. The saints on whose relics Tassilo swore were Dionysius/Denis, Rusticus and Eleutherius, Germanus and Martin.

<sup>225</sup> On the nature of Tassilo's relationship with Pippin, see Becher, *Eid und Herrschaft*, pp. 25-35.

removes himself from Pippin's army, reneging on his earlier oaths and promises despite 'all the good his uncle King Pippin had done for him' because of 'his evil character'.<sup>226</sup> This was the last time he attended any Frankish assemblies, but he was able to keep a low profile for the following twenty years because Charlemagne had other concerns than Bavaria during the early years of his reign.

By 781 something had gone wrong between the Carolingian cousins, and for reasons not explained in the annals, Pope Hadrian sent messengers to Tassilo imploring him to remember his oaths to Pippin, his son and the Franks,<sup>227</sup> placing Tassilo in subordination not just to his relatives, but to the entire Frankish people. The report continues: Tassilo agreed to give hostages to Charlemagne and renew the oaths he had sworn to Pippin – again, we do not know the background to this – but he 'did not keep the promises that he had made for very long.'<sup>228</sup> Events came to a head in 787, although again the annals do not provide the specific context for the ongoing disagreement. This time it was Tassilo who appealed for papal intervention, but Pope Hadrian, becoming 'aware of the deceit and inconstancy' of Tassilo's messengers, threatened the duke and his followers with anathema if they refused to obey their oaths to the Frankish king.<sup>229</sup>

The account makes it clear Tassilo is responsible for breaking the peace, justifying Charlemagne's decision to march on Bavaria with three armies: his own (presumably of 'Franks'), an army composed of 'Austrasian Franks, Thuringians and Saxons' and a third army from Italy.<sup>230</sup> It is interesting we learn the specific composition of the second army. Geographically, such a composition would make sense, but this may also be an effort to highlight these peoples were loyal to Charlemagne and obeying their oaths, unlike Tassilo. The latter's supporters now apparently abandoned him – he realised 'all the Bavarians were more loyal to the

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<sup>226</sup> ARF, s.a. 763: '*Pippinus rex habuit placitum suum in Nivernis et quartum iter faciens in Aquitaniam. Ibiq[ue] Tassilo dux Baioariorum postposuit sacramenta et omnia, quae promiserat, et per malum ingenium se inde seduxit, omni benefacta, quae Pippinus rex avunculus eius ei fecit, postposuit; per ingenia fraudulenta se subtrahendo Baioariam petiit et nusquam amplius faciem supradicti regis videre voluit.*'

<sup>227</sup> ARF, s.a. 781.

<sup>228</sup> ARF, s.a. 781: '*Sed non diu praefatus dux Tassilo promissiones, quas fecerat, conservavit.*'

<sup>229</sup> ARF, s.a. 787.

<sup>230</sup> ARF, s.a. 787: '*Tunc domnus rex Carolus una cum Francis videns iustitiam suam, iter coepit peragere partibus Baioariae cum exercitu suo... Et iussit alium exercitum fieri, id est Franci Austrasiorum, Toringi, Saxones... Et tertium exercitum iussit fieri partibus Italiae.*'

Lord King Charles than to himself<sup>231</sup> – and conceded defeat, along with Bavaria and thirteen hostages, including his own son.

The following year, at an assembly at Ingelheim, the ‘loyal’ Bavarians – loyal to Charlemagne – denounced their *dux* as a traitor, and he confessed to a great many crimes, including threatening the lives of Charlemagne’s envoys and seeking aid from the Avars.<sup>232</sup> He was condemned to death by ‘the Franks, Bavarians, Lombards and Saxons and those from all the provinces who had assembled at that council’, an impressive list of jurors, who apparently also remembered and took into account his previous crime of abandoning Pippin III’s Aquitanian campaign.<sup>233</sup> This was an opportunity for Charlemagne to show mercy, however, and he allowed Tassilo to enter monastic retirement. This was not quite the end of the incident, because Tassilo and his wife Liutberg – who had allegedly advised him in his disloyalty – had ensured the Avars would attack the Franks in retaliation for Charlemagne’s actions. We shall return to the significance of this shortly, but for now we simply need to note the Franks triumphed over the Avars in three battles, with the help of God of course.<sup>234</sup>

There are certainly similarities in the way the actions of these two wayward members of the Carolingian dynasty were portrayed. Specifically, each is made to appear as acting treacherously, disloyal or outright rebelliously towards the ‘legitimate’ branch of the Carolingian family, and they consistently reject their relatives’ attempts to make peace. Furthermore, each is associated more closely with the peripheries and peripheral peoples than with the Franks. In presenting these men in this way, the early Carolingian authors both built upon and contributed to the ambiguous association between rebelliousness, peripheral status and exclusion from the community.

Both the *AMP*-author and the reviser of *ARF* portray Grifo’s actions as acts of rebellion or treachery against his brothers. In the latter source, it is Grifo who

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<sup>231</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 787: ‘*Tunc praespiciens se Tassilo... omnes Baioarii plus essent fideles domno rege Carolo quam ei.*’

<sup>232</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 788.

<sup>233</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 788: ‘*Et de haec omnia conprobatu, Franci et Baioarii, Langobardi et Saxones, vel ex omnibus provinciis, qui ad eundem synodum congregati fuerunt, reminiscetes priorum malorum eius, et quomodo domnum Pippinum regem in exercitu derelinquens et ibi, quod theodisca lingua harisliz dicitur, visi sunt iudicasse eundem Tassilonem ad mortem.*’

<sup>234</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 788.

declares war on Pippin and Carloman, thus breaking the peace that followed Charles Martel's death.<sup>235</sup> The *AMP*-author, meanwhile, reports Grifo was not alone when he went to Saxony: 'by tyranny' he had 'allied with many of the nobility... Many fickle young men of noble Frankish birth followed Grifo and were led away from their own master.'<sup>236</sup> In this way, Grifo induced others into rebellion along with him, so he is held responsible for the actions of his followers.

But Grifo's alliances with various peripheral peoples were probably even more damning in the eyes of a Carolingian audience, since these placed him outside the community amongst the rebellious peripheral peoples. Immediately after being released from captivity by Pippin in 747, Grifo flees to the Saxons, who, as we have already seen, could be regarded as inherently rebellious. Indeed, according to the reviser of *ARF*, Grifo went from Saxony to Bavaria because he was 'lacking confidence in the loyalty of the Saxons'.<sup>237</sup> Before this, though, Grifo provides the Saxons with a leader around whom they can rally in their disloyalty to Pippin;<sup>238</sup> in other words he forsakes his position in the community for power outside it.

What we see in these accounts is Grifo held up as a stark contrast to Pippin. The latter leads the loyal Frankish army and is generous in victory, while Grifo's followers are disloyal and treacherous and Grifo rejects Pippin's attempts to make peace.<sup>239</sup> Before the flight to Saxony, the reviser of *ARF* makes it clear Grifo would have been given a place of honour in Francia, but he 'was unwilling to be subjected to his brother'.<sup>240</sup> Meanwhile, according to *AMP* and both versions of *ARF*, after removing Grifo from Bavaria, Pippin intended to give him rule over twelve counties in Neustria, despite all his previous acts of disloyalty.<sup>241</sup> Grifo was clearly not interested in compromise, though, and he fled once more, this time to Aquitaine before finally attempting to cross the Alps to the Lombard Kingdom. In each of these cases he is also associated with fellow antagonists of the Franks, Waifar and Aistulf, each of whom took their turn as Pippin's chief rival in the sources.<sup>242</sup> The historians, then, were attempting to lessen Grifo's 'Frankishness' through a constant

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<sup>235</sup> Revised *ARF*, s.a. 741.

<sup>236</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 748.

<sup>237</sup> Revised *ARF*, s.a. 748: '*Grifo Saxonum fidei diffidens Baioariam petiit.*'

<sup>238</sup> Revised *ARF*, s.a. 747.

<sup>239</sup> Revised *ARF*, s.a. 748.

<sup>240</sup> Revised *ARF*, s.a. 747: '*Frater Carlomanni et Pippini, nomine Grifo, Pippino fratri suo subiectus esse nolens, quamquam sub illo honorifice viveret.*'

<sup>241</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 748; *AMP*, s.a. 749; Revised *ARF*, s.a. 748.

<sup>242</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 753-6, 760-3.

association of him with the peripheries and with the concept of rebelliousness; after all, despite being the son of Charles Martel, he had thrown away his place in the community not once, but twice, and is consistently depicted as ‘fleeing’ from the Frankish heartlands to the peripheral regions.

Like Grifo, Tassilo was an outsider despite his descent from Charles Martel; indeed, he was more a Bavarian than a Frank, being the son of the ‘rebellious’ Odilo and Charles’s daughter Hiltrude, who fled to Bavaria after her father’s death,<sup>243</sup> sacrificing her position in the community just like Grifo. Nevertheless, Tassilo’s actions are framed within the context of his failure to keep to his oaths of loyalty, so the depiction of him is subject to the same kind of ambiguity as with other peripheral peoples, wherein they had a place in the community on some level, but abandoned this by acting rebelliously. Tassilo’s status as *dux* of Bavaria was probably enough to make clear his peripheral status; indeed, it may have helped audiences understand why a descendant of Charles Martel would be so disloyal towards Charlemagne. But Tassilo also associated himself with a people who were completely beyond the pale when he attempted to ally with the Avars.<sup>244</sup> To a Frankish audience such an alliance would appear completely unacceptable. Like Grifo before him, Tassilo had chosen alliance with external peoples over an honourable position within the *regnum Francorum*, with the result that, after his deposition, the Franks, Bavarians and Lombards – those peoples within the *regnum* – were attacked three times by Avar armies. With the treatment of Grifo and Tassilo, then, we can see the blurring of the lines of otherness. By rights, both men were members of the Carolingian community – they were, after all, members of the ruling dynasty. But each chose to oppose the will of the men who had established themselves as the dominant members of the dynasty, and for this each was vilified as a rebel.

## 2.4 Boniface, the Missionaries and Paganism

One of the most important influences on Frankish policy with regard to the peoples across the Rhine in the eighth century came not from within the *regnum Francorum* but from the Anglo-Saxons who came to the continent in increasing numbers during

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<sup>243</sup> *Continuationes*, 25.

<sup>244</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 788.



the century, first to work as missionaries and later to fill more general ecclesiastical roles in the empire the Carolingians were creating.<sup>245</sup> In their role as missionaries, Anglo-Saxons worked in areas that were either still pagan or not subject to the strict ecclesiastical hierarchy that was becoming the norm in Francia. But to undertake conversion and organisation, the missionaries often found it necessary to make connections with Frankish rulers and popes, who could provide them with the often necessary justification and backing for their activities. The man who pursued such policies more than any other – and probably the most famous of the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon missionaries – was Boniface, who will be the focus for much of what follows, although as recent scholarship has shown, he was much more than simply a missionary.<sup>246</sup>

In this section, then, we shall examine the contribution made to the discourse of otherness by Boniface and those in his circle, as well as those who were later influenced by his work. We shall begin with Boniface himself and see how during his lifetime he was something of an outsider. We shall likewise see he was not the missionary he may have originally intended to be when he first came to the continent, at least in terms of working towards the conversion of pagans; his most important contributions to the Carolingian community were actually in the sphere of Church organisation. Nevertheless, we shall see Boniface's missionary intentions remained an important part of how he was remembered, and were crucial for his post-mortem transformation from outsider to saint of the community. In the second part of this section we shall look at how Boniface spearheaded an increasing concern on the part of the Carolingians to define paganism. Such attempts were as much about defining the community as the outsiders, because they outlined what beliefs and practices were unacceptable to the Carolingian community.

#### **2.4.1 Boniface; outsider, missionary and saint**

As a historical figure, Boniface loomed large in the eighth century, and has since loomed large in studies of the period.<sup>247</sup> Originally born Winfrith in Wessex towards

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<sup>245</sup> For an overview, see Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons*.

<sup>246</sup> See the contributions to T. Reuter, *The Greatest Englishman: Essays on St Boniface and the Church at Crediton* (Exeter, 1980).

<sup>247</sup> The classic study of Boniface's life remains T. Schieffer, *Wifrid-Bonifatius und die Christliche Grundlegung Europas* (Frieberg, 1954).

the end of the seventh century,<sup>248</sup> most of what we know of him comes from the saint's surviving correspondence and Willibald's *Vita Bonifatii* – composed in the decade after the saint's death. According to the *Vita*, Winfrith became a monk at Exeter at an early age before transferring to Nursling where he was *magister*.<sup>249</sup> Much more is known about his life after he chose to leave his monastery to work as a missionary in Frisia in 716, although the precise details can be elusive.

Winfrith's first mission to Frisia proved to be a false start, and he soon returned to his native land. However, he was back on the continent within two years, and in 718 travelled to Rome to obtain papal backing for his mission. This was granted, and Winfrith was given the new name *Bonifatius* in honour of a Roman martyr.<sup>250</sup> His mission was now to be directed to Hesse and Thuringia, rather than Frisia, although he continued to focus on the latter between 719 and 721 following the death of the Frisian ruler Radbod. After a second visit to Rome in 722 and his appointment as missionary bishop – without a see – he spent close to two decades establishing, reforming and reorganising the churches of Thuringia, Hesse, and Bavaria.<sup>251</sup> In 738 he travelled to Rome again, and was officially appointed papal legate, as well as being elevated to the rank of archbishop, although still without a see. In the 740s Boniface shifted his focus to the reform of the Frankish churches, leading synods held between 742 and 744.<sup>252</sup> In 746 he was granted the see of Mainz, which provided a focus for his remaining years. He maintained an interest in monasticism, throughout his career; the most important of his monastic foundations was Fulda – founded with Sturm in 744.<sup>253</sup> Finally, in 753, Boniface appointed his pupil Lull as his successor in Mainz, and left the latter in charge of his duties there

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<sup>248</sup> The exact date of Winfrith's birth is unknown, but a date between 670 and 680 is generally accepted. See G.W. Greenaway, *Saint Boniface: Three Biographical Studies for the Twelfth Centenary Festival*, (London, 1955), p. 8; F. Barlow, 'The English Background', in T. Reuter, *The Greatest Englishman: Essays on St Boniface and the Church at Crediton* (Exeter, 1980), pp. 11-29, at 26-7.

<sup>249</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 1-3.

<sup>250</sup> Despite Willibald's claim Winfrith was given the name on his consecration as bishop in 722, the letter from Gregory II outlining the mission of 718 is the first to address him as Boniface. Boniface, *Epistolae*, 12.

<sup>251</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 5-7.

<sup>252</sup> Boniface, *Epistolae*, 56, 59-62; *Vita Bonifatii*, 7-8.

<sup>253</sup> The foundation of Fulda is only mentioned incidentally by Willibald; *Vita Bonifatii*, 8. On the other hand it is one of the focal points of Eigil of Fulda's *Life of Sturm*; Eigil, *Vita Sturmi*, ed. P. Engelbert, *Die Vita Sturmi des Eigil von Fulda: literarkritisch-historische Untersuchung und Edition* (Marsburg, 1968), 5-13. On Boniface as a monk and monastic founder, as well as the contrast between his Benedictine ideals and the non-Benedictine nature of his monasteries, see C. Holdsworth, 'Saint Boniface the Monk', in Reuter, *The Greatest Englishman*, pp. 47-67.

so he could return to his missionary work in Frisia, where he was martyred the following year.<sup>254</sup>

Boniface has primarily been remembered as the ‘Apostle of Germany’, a title with obvious missionary connotations. But while he began and ended his career on the continent working as a missionary in Frisia, Hesse and Thuringia, there is little evidence of missionary work in other parts of his career. Instead, for most of his life he was involved in the reform and reorganisation of existing Christian communities, rather than the creation of new ones. Yet mission was central to the way Boniface saw his role in the world around him, and it has certainly been central to many modern interpretations of his life.<sup>255</sup> Since the middle of the twentieth century, though, interpretations of the saint have changed. Scholars now emphasise the multi-faceted nature of Boniface’s career,<sup>256</sup> an emphasis which is supported by the sources.

One aspect of Boniface’s career has been undervalued by historians, though; his status as an outsider. This was a crucial part of the way Boniface operated on the continent and the way he was depicted in hagiography after his death. Not only was Boniface not a Frank, he acted as though he knew better what was good for the Frankish Church than the Franks themselves did; such could have been the contemporary opinion. Fortunately for him, Boniface was not alone in his desire for reform. His most important supporter in the *regnum Francorum* was the mayor Carloman, in association with whom he held two church councils and inspired others.<sup>257</sup> Also crucial, particularly to Boniface’s long-term reputation, were the Anglo-Saxons who had followed him to the continent, such as Lull, his eventual successor as bishop of Mainz,<sup>258</sup> and those whom he brought to his cause, like

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<sup>254</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 8. For Boniface’s request that Pippin III recognise Lull as his successor, see Boniface, *Epistolae*, 93.

<sup>255</sup> For a recent summary of the many interpretations of Boniface, see J.T. Palmer, ‘Saxon or European? Interpreting and Reinterpreting St Boniface’, *History Compass*, 4/5 (2006), 852–869.

<sup>256</sup> The trend began with Levison, *England and the Continent*, pp. 70-93. See also Greenaway, *Saint Boniface*; Reuter, ‘Saint Boniface and Europe’, pp. 69-94; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 150-61. The most recent re-statement of this assessment is Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 58-9.

<sup>257</sup> Levison, *England and the Continent*, pp. 82-90.

<sup>258</sup> For Lull’s importance in the commemoration of Boniface, see J.T. Palmer, ‘The ‘vigorous rule’ of Bishop Lull: between Bonifatian mission and Carolingian church control’, *Early Medieval Europe*, 13 (2005), 249-276.

Sturm, first abbot of Fulda, and Gregory, who went on to lead the community of Utrecht.

Through the patronage of the ruling Frankish family and the efforts of his disciples, Boniface became the first new saint of the Carolingian period, and was transformed from outsider to spiritual guide of the *regnum Francorum*. It is this transformation we shall trace here by looking at the somewhat different men found in the saint's own correspondence and in Willibald's *Vita*. In the correspondence we find a man who had a clear sense of his mission on the continent but who was continually disappointed and frustrated by the lack of zeal he encountered in his continental contemporaries. In *Vita Bonifatii*, meanwhile, we have the text that established the cult of Boniface by presenting him not just as a missionary, but as a man who had worked for the good of the Franks, and had their interests in mind, as well as sharing their secular opponents. By emphasising the otherness of these opponents, Willibald was able to blur the lines which had separated Boniface from the Franks during his lifetime, thus making him more accessible to them.

When Boniface arrived on the continent in 718 he was an unknown Anglo-Saxon monk with nothing but a letter of recommendation from his bishop.<sup>259</sup> Despite the extent to which his reputation grew in the following thirty six years, Boniface remained first and foremost an Anglo-Saxon. While he worked towards the organisation of the continental churches, such efforts were not always appreciated by the bishops of those churches.<sup>260</sup> Admittedly, it is difficult to see how he would have achieved anything at all without some level of episcopal support, and from the 740s he was nominally the superior of eight bishops in Bavaria, Hesse and Thuringia, with at least three of these being fellow Anglo-Saxons.<sup>261</sup> On the other hand, we can see from the letters sent to and by Boniface, he had a troubled relationship with his contemporaries.

The collection of Boniface's correspondence which has come down to us was probably put together by Lull, his successor as bishop of Mainz, who was also responsible for overseeing the creation of Willibald's *Vita Bonifatii*; both were part of an effort to create a cult of Boniface based at Mainz.<sup>262</sup> One of the key elements

<sup>259</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, p. 151.

<sup>260</sup> The classic study of this aspect of Boniface's career remains E. Ewig, *Milo et Eiusmodi Similes*, in E. Ewig (ed.), *Spätantikes und Fränkisches Gallien* (München, 1979), pp. 189-219.

<sup>261</sup> Levison, *England and the Continent*, pp. 80-2.

<sup>262</sup> Palmer, 'Bishop Lull', pp. 251-6.

of this process was to show Boniface had been accepted by the Frankish episcopate – indeed, by the Franks in general – as one of them. For this reason, we have several letters relating to the acts of the synods of the 740s and a substantial number of letters recommending Boniface to various groups and requesting or acknowledging protection of him. The former are clearly unmistakable as showing Boniface at the height of his integration into Frankish religious society. The latter, though, are somewhat more ambiguous. Lull may have intended them to show Boniface was accepted and protected by the highest powers, but such letters in fact show just how much support he required in order get cooperation from the bishops he encountered.<sup>263</sup>

Likewise, some of the letters show clearly Boniface's distaste for the Frankish bishops he encountered, whom he saw as worldly and unworthy of office. We hear specifically of Gewilib of Mainz, 'a seducer who formerly falsely executed the office of bishop',<sup>264</sup> and Milo of Trier 'and others like him, who do much harm to the churches of God'.<sup>265</sup> It seems Boniface's objections to these men were canonical; both men inherited their positions from their fathers, and Milo held multiple bishoprics, while Gewilib may have been married or had concubines.<sup>266</sup> These men were not unique among the early eighth-century bishops, but for Boniface they represented standards that were no longer acceptable. Boniface also appears to have had an ongoing rivalry with Virgil of Salzburg – an Irishman and thus also something of an outsider on the continent – which involved them competing for the approval of Pope Zacharias and the support of Odilo of Bavaria.<sup>267</sup> Virgil obtained papal approval first for his view that there was no need to rebaptise those whose first baptism had been performed incorrectly.<sup>268</sup> Boniface turned the tables, though, when he reported Virgil's heretical belief in a world below this one, with other men and its own sun and moon.<sup>269</sup> Needless to say, Zacharias

<sup>263</sup> See, for example, Boniface, *Epistolae*, 17, 19, 20, 22, 25, 42, 43, 44, 48.

<sup>264</sup> Boniface, *Epistolae*, 60: 'seductore nomine Geoleobo, qui antea false episcopi honore fungebantur.'

<sup>265</sup> Boniface, *Epistolae*, 87: 'De Milone autem et eiusmodi similibus, qui ecclesiis Dei plurimum nocent...'

<sup>266</sup> Ewig, 'Milo', pp. 190-207.

<sup>267</sup> On Virgil, see H. Wolfram, *Die Geburt Mitteleuropas: Geschichte Österreichs vor seiner Entstehung 378-907* (Vienna, 1987), pp. 127-42; H. Wolfram, 'Virgil of St Peter's at Salzburg', in P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (eds.), *Irland und die Christenheit*, pp. 415-20.

<sup>268</sup> Boniface, *Epistolae*, 68.

<sup>269</sup> Boniface, *Epistolae*, 80: 'alius mundus et alii homines sub terra sint seu sol et luna.' The belief may have been a misunderstanding of ancient learning regarding the spherical nature of the earth and its antipodes, see Levison, *England and the Continent*, p. 88.

disapproved and apparently summoned Virgil to Rome in order to investigate this belief, as well as Boniface's accusation Virgil had been 'making insinuations to *dux* Odilo of Bavaria in order to sow dissension' between the duke and Boniface.<sup>270</sup> Here we can clearly see an example of rival churchmen competing for the support of both the papacy and local rulers; as outsiders both of them required as much support as possible.

While these glimpses of Boniface's relations with individual bishops are important for interpreting how he was received on the continent, we must also bear in mind the socio-political climate he came to work in. Boniface may have believed in his own good intentions towards the inhabitants of the *regnum Francorum*, but he was working around a long-established episcopacy with its own traditions and ways of doing things. In this sense it is easy to see why he would have come into conflict with certain bishops who saw him as interfering in their areas of authority. Again, we have a specific example of this. In a letter of 753 to Pope Stephen II, Boniface referred to his dispute with the bishop of Cologne over who had authority to appoint bishops to Utrecht.<sup>271</sup> Boniface claimed the authority was his, stating Utrecht had been given to Willibrord, and after the latter's death Carloman had asked Boniface to appoint and consecrate a new bishop. The counterclaim of Cologne, as reported by Boniface, was Utrecht had been given to that bishopric by Dagobert I, on the condition it be used as a base from which to convert the Frisians. Since this had not been done, Boniface implies Cologne had forfeited its authority over Utrecht, thus strengthening his own claim.

What we see here is not just a conflict of authority, but the way in which Boniface was working with a different purpose to some of the bishops he encountered. For Boniface, the issue was not simply about appointing bishops to Utrecht; it was also about using the city as a missionary base, something in which, apparently, the bishops of Cologne were not interested.<sup>272</sup> It is easy to see such conflicts of interest as being the basis for his disputes with Gewilib and Milo; where Boniface was a herald of correction, reform and – when the opportunity presented itself – missionary work, these were not necessarily priorities for other bishops, or if they were, the bishops were not happy to be led by an outsider.

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<sup>270</sup> Boniface, *Epistolae*, 80.

<sup>271</sup> Boniface, *Epistolae*, 109.

<sup>272</sup> In his letter Boniface neglected to mention Chunibert of Cologne, who appears to have been an active missionary. See Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 159-60.

Yet we should not forget Boniface had the support of the Carolingians, even if they patronised Willibrord as much as Boniface. But despite his close ties with Carloman, at the end of his life Boniface still saw himself as an outsider working amongst those who had not fully accepted him or his Anglo-Saxon followers, hence his letter to Abbot Fulrad asking him to petition Pippin III for the protection of his disciples:

I beg his royal highness our king... that he would deign to announce and entrust to me now his intentions regarding my surviving disciples and what kind of provision he will make for them. For they are almost all foreigners... I am worried about all of them, that they will be ruined after my death if they do not have your Highness's protection and... will be scattered like sheep without a shepherd.<sup>273</sup>

This may not just have been rhetoric on Boniface's part. There is no evidence to suggest he was particularly close with Pippin III, and so his involvement in Frankish politics may have lessened after Carloman's abdication in 747.<sup>274</sup> Pippin sent Abbot Fulrad and Bishop Burghard, not Boniface, to Rome to negotiate with the papacy on his behalf in the 750s.<sup>275</sup> Likewise, Chrodegang of Metz, who rose to an increasingly prominent position after Pippin became king, is a notable absence from Boniface's letters.<sup>276</sup> He was appointed archbishop by Pope Stephen III and became the leader of Frankish reform after Boniface's death, so Pippin was clearly cultivating his own reformers.<sup>277</sup> At the time of his death in 754, then, Boniface was probably still seen in an ambiguous light, and it seems necessary to conclude there was still a great deal of work to be done if he was to be accepted as a patron saint by those he had spent nearly forty years working among. This work was taken up by his successor Lull, who determined to create a cult of Saint Boniface as reformer of the Frankish Church and missionary-martyr.

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<sup>273</sup> Boniface, *Epistolae*, 93: '*deprecor celsitudinem regis nostrii... ut mihi nunc viventi indicare et mandare dignetur circa discipulos meos, qualem mercedem postea de illis facere voluerit... Sunt enim pene omnes peregrini... De his omnibus sollicitus sum, ut post obitum meum non disperdantur, sed ut habeant... patrocinium celsitudinis vestrae et non sint dispersi sicut oves non habentes pastorem.*' Boniface switches from addressing Fulrad to addressing Pippin directly in the course of the letter.

<sup>274</sup> See Goosmann, *Memorable Crises*, p. 171 with n. 56.

<sup>275</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, p. 157. James Palmer, however, has now disputed that Fulrad and Burghard were sent to Rome by Pippin; see Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 83-5.

<sup>276</sup> On Chrodegang, see M.A. Claussen, *The Reform of the Frankish Church: Chrodegang of Metz and the Regula canonicorum in the Eighth Century* (Cambridge, 2004), especially pp. 6-7, 26-7, 154 for him and Boniface.

<sup>277</sup> Claussen, *Reform*, pp. 20-8.

As Boniface's successor in the bishopric of Mainz, Lull took it upon himself to attempt to continue all aspects of his predecessor's work, not just ecclesiastical, but monastic and missionary as well, as James Palmer's recent study has shown.<sup>278</sup> Lull also had a central role in establishing and developing the cult of St Boniface. There was clearly disagreement amongst the saint's disciples as to how best to commemorate their master and what the nature of his legacy was,<sup>279</sup> so by commissioning Willibald's *Vita Bonifatii*, Lull was probably aiming to give pre-eminence to his own vision of Boniface. To this end, Willibald's *Vita* is as much a reflection of how Lull saw his own role as how Boniface himself had lived, with Lull overseeing the *Vita*'s composition.<sup>280</sup>

Willibald probably did not know Boniface personally, and so relied on the testimonies of those who had known him when composing the *Vita*.<sup>281</sup> Because of such testimonies, Willibald's text comes reasonably close to covering all aspects of Boniface's work, touching as it does on his work amongst the Frisians, Hessians and Thuringians, his subsequent organisation of the Churches in Hesse and Thuringia, his reform of the Church in Bavaria, and his role in the Frankish synods of the 740s. However, even this text clearly shows the specific ways in which author and patron wanted the saint to be remembered, and in doing so highlights the ways in which Willibald engaged in the emerging discourse of otherness to make Boniface part of the community. Of these, the description and extent of Boniface's missionary work and the denunciation of his opponents as pagans and heretics are particularly important, but Willibald also mentions the saint's early years as a monk and his importance in the reform councils of the 740s.

The account of Boniface's years in Wessex takes up three and a half chapters, forming a third of the text, but the details are sparse.<sup>282</sup> After showing an interest in spiritual matters from an early age, Winfrith was placed in the monastery of Exeter by his father, and later moved to Nursling.<sup>283</sup> None of this is out of the ordinary for a saint's *Life*, but Willibald went on to emphasise Boniface gained fame

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<sup>278</sup> Palmer, 'Bishop Lull'.

<sup>279</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 61-73. On the disagreements between Lull and Sturm, see Eigil, *Vita Sturmii*, 16.

<sup>280</sup> Palmer, 'Bishop Lull', p. 259, 268-75; Wood, *Missionary Life*, p. 61. Petra Kehl has maintained it was Willibald's own spiritual priorities that determined the nature of the *Vita*; see P. Kehl, *Kult und Nachleben des heiligen Bonifatius im Mittelalter (754-1200)* (Fulda, 1993), p. 75

<sup>281</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 1.

<sup>282</sup> Holdsworth, 'Saint Boniface the Monk', p. 49.

<sup>283</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 1-3.



as a teacher of the monks, and after being summoned to carry an important message from the king to the archbishop of Canterbury he came to take part in the royal councils of Wessex.<sup>284</sup> This prefigures his continental career rather well, reflecting as it does the saint's role as teacher, his association with secular rulers and the papacy and his involvement in Church Councils. Thus, Willibald probably meant for Boniface's monastic career to be read as a prologue to his continental career, although it might also have been designed to make the text more relevant to an Anglo-Saxon audience and those living in Boniface's monastic establishments such as Fulda.<sup>285</sup>

What exactly did Willibald imagine was the nature of Boniface's work on the continent? We learn from the *Vita* Boniface worked as a missionary whenever the opportunity arose, but the majority of his work involved the reform of existing Christian communities. It was mission which brought Boniface to the continent in the first place, and he was martyred while attempting one last missionary thrust against the Frisians. However, the period of his life between 722 and 753 seems curiously lacking in missionary activity, at least in the sense of working towards the conversion of pagans to Christianity. When Boniface worked in Hesse, Thuringia, Bavaria and Francia, it was to reorganise and re-educate the existing Christian communities, as Willibald had to acknowledge.<sup>286</sup>

Nevertheless, there is a missionary feel running through the *Vita*. The few Biblical references in the text come from Paul's letters – with an implied sense of Boniface as Paul's apostolic successor – and the Gospel of Matthew, the most evangelical of the gospels.<sup>287</sup> Lull's own missionary interests are also hinted at in the *Vita*. According to Willibald, when Boniface appointed Willibald and Burghard to the sees of Eichstätt and Würzburg to continue his work, he granted them all the churches within the borders of the Franks, Saxons and Slavs.<sup>288</sup> At that time the Franks had no territorial holdings in either Saxony or the Slavic lands, which

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<sup>284</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 4.

<sup>285</sup> On the Anglo-Saxon aspects of the *Vita*, see Kehl, *Kult und Nachleben*, pp. 71-2.

<sup>286</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, p. 64.

<sup>287</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, p. 62. For the influence of the Gospel of Matthew on Boniface's and Lull's correspondence, see J.H.W. Clay, *In the Shadow of Death: Saint Boniface and the Conversion of Hesse, 721-754* (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 239-242 with notes.

<sup>288</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 8. Willibald of Eichstätt is not the same Willibald who wrote the *Vita*. The former was the subject of Hygeburg of Heidenheim's *Vita Willibaldi*, also known as the *Hoedeporicon*; Hygeburg, *Vita Willibaldi*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH SS* 15, 1 (Hanover, 1887). On this text, see Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 64-6.

suggests Lull and Megingoz – Burghard’s successor as bishop of Würzburg and Lull’s co-sponsor of the *Vita* – were laying the foundations for missionary work in these regions, although there was no opportunity for this in the 760s. When Charlemagne undertook his Saxon wars, though, Lull was one of his chief advisors, even if he was probably not responsible for the policy of forced conversion.<sup>289</sup> Alternatively, we might see this as Willibald associating the ecclesiastical authority of Boniface and his disciples with the temporal authority of the Franks over peripheral peoples, even if, as we have seen, the early Carolingians made little claim to authority over the Slavs.

Willibald was probably attempting to show Boniface as a missionary despite his subject’s limited accomplishments in this area,<sup>290</sup> which would make sense if he had access to the saint’s letters, with their various references to the concept of mission.<sup>291</sup> In the *Vita*, after achieving limited success in Frisia, Boniface – ‘remembering’ his papal mission – goes to Hesse, where he encounters a population practicing ‘rustic rites’, from which he frees them through his ‘evangelical preaching’.<sup>292</sup> The point is reinforced in Boniface’s report to the pope, in which he states he brought many people from the ‘sacrilegious worship of demons to the community of the holy Church’.<sup>293</sup> Likewise, when Boniface returns to Hesse he finds some of the population still involved in superstitious practices: worshipping at trees and springs; openly making sacrifices; divining the future; performing occult rites and sacrifices. After consulting with those who had been successfully converted, Boniface decides to cut down a sacred oak at Geismar, which is called the Oak of Jupiter ‘in the pagan language’.<sup>294</sup> We shall return to early Carolingian descriptions of pagan practices and to Willibald’s ‘Oak of Jupiter’ shortly, but for now we can say a little about the purpose the latter serves in the *Vita*. Miraculously, as Boniface hacks at the tree it bursts apart into four trunks of equal length; it is to this event Willibald attributes the conversion of the remaining Hessians. The

<sup>289</sup> Palmer, ‘Bishop Lull’, pp. 268-73.

<sup>290</sup> Against Wood, *Missionary Life*, p. 64: ‘Boniface had not been the great missionary figure of his dreams, nor was he presented as one by Willibald.’

<sup>291</sup> For a thorough analysis of the references to mission in the letters of both Boniface and Lull, see Clay, *Shadow of Death*, pp. 237-77.

<sup>292</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 6: ‘*Similiter et iuxta fines Saxonum Hessorum populorum paganis adhuc ritibus oberrantem a demoniorum euangelica praedicando mandata captivitate liberavit.*’

<sup>293</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 6: ‘*... multitudinem plebis a sacrilege demonum cultura ad consortium sanctae ecclesiae adscisciret...*’

<sup>294</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 6: ‘*Quorum consultu atque consilio roborem quondam mirae magnitudinis, qui prisco paganorum vocabulo appellatur robor Iobis, in loco qui dicitur Gaesmere, servis Dei secum adstantibus, succidere temptavit.*’ On Hessian paganism, see Clay, *Shadow of Death*, pp. 280-91.

veracity of this part of the *Vita* has been questioned by historians who note there is no mention of the felling of the oak in Boniface's own correspondence, and there has even been speculation it owes more to Sulpicius Severus's *Vita Martini* than any genuine episode in Boniface's life.<sup>295</sup> Whatever influenced Willibald to include this story in his *Vita*, though, it seems clear he intended it to be the epitome of Boniface's work against the pagans of Germania, and it serves to emphasise the missionary nature of his work.

Curiously, though, just as the felling of the Jupiter Oak marks the high point of Boniface's missionary work, it is also the last real encounter the saint has with any explicit paganism. When Boniface moves to Thuringia he is confronted with a situation where the current rulers, Theobald and Heden, had allowed their subjects to fall back into their old religious habits, but these are described by Willibald as heretical rather than pagan.<sup>296</sup> As we shall see, even this was a misrepresentation of the situation. Likewise, when he goes on to Bavaria, his work is primarily concerned with re-educating heretics rather than converting pagans.<sup>297</sup> There is a hint at pagan survivals in the Hessian and Thuringian countryside, where Boniface's followers remain, baptising the locals,<sup>298</sup> but the only further explicit mention of paganism comes when the saint returns to Frisia and preaches against 'rustic' rites and destroys heathen customs.<sup>299</sup> Thus, the juxtaposition present in Boniface's life between his desire to act as a missionary and the realistic limitations placed on his ability to do this are found even in a hagiographical text which presented an idealised view of the saint. Willibald knew how important mission was to the saint and wanted this to be a part of the *Vita*. He was, however, confronted with Boniface's failure to evangelise the Saxons, and rather than including this in his text, he instead exaggerated the saint's accomplishments in other areas, specifically

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<sup>295</sup> See Wood, *Missionary Life*, p. 60, following R.M. Price, 'The Holy Man and Christianisation from the Apocryphal Apostles to St Stephen of Perm', in J. Howard-Johnston and P.A. Hayward, *The Cult of Saints*, pp. 215-38, at 221-2. James Palmer has also commented on this aspect of the *Vita*, particularly noting the likely borrowing of phraseology from Aldhelm of Malmesbury's retelling of the story; see Palmer, 'Defining Paganism', p. 412.

<sup>296</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 6.

<sup>297</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 7.

<sup>298</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 6: 'Et alii quidem in provincia Hessorum, alii etiam in Thyringea disperse late per populum, pagos ac vicos verbum Dei praedicabant. Cumque ingens utriusque populi multitudo fidei sacramenta, multis milibus hominum baptizatis perciperet.' For a positive assessment of Boniface's achievements in southern Saxony, see Clay, *Shadow of Death*, pp. 206-11.

<sup>299</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 8: 'Per omnem igitur Frisiam pergens, verbum Domini, paganico repulso ritu et erraneo gentilitatis more destructo, instanter praedicabat ecclesiasque, numine confracto dilubrorum, ingenti studio fabricavit.'

Frisia, Hesse and Thuringia, and had the encounter at Geismar stand for the missionary sentiment that ran through the saint's career.<sup>300</sup>

This missionary angle also comes across in the way Willibald presents Boniface's opponents as pagans or heretics, and it is here the saint's biographer engages most clearly with a discourse of otherness, misrepresenting such men in order to glorify the saint and stress his place in the community. The first of these opponents is Radbod, who we already know was an opponent of Charles Martel. This is how he appears in the *Vita*, albeit with a much more explicitly religious angle. For Willibald, Radbod was not just a political antagonist, he was a persecutor who expelled Christians from Frisia and destroyed churches, replacing them with idols and temples.<sup>301</sup> Of course, Radbod actually was a pagan, but Willibald neglected to mention his alliance with Charles's Neustrian opponents and in this way made him even more explicitly an outsider. We shall return to Willibald's presentation of Radbod and how it differs from those found in other sources in the following chapter, so for now let us turn to Boniface's other opponents.

After leaving Frisia, Boniface came to Hesse, where he threw out a group of heretical priests. In Thuringia, meanwhile, he encountered the rulers Theobald and Heden, who had supposedly allowed their people to slip back into 'rustic' and heretical practices, from which Boniface had to save them. While Theobald is not mentioned in any other source, Heden is known to have been a supporter of Willibrord and his monastery at Echternach, the same missionary and monastery that were so generously supported by Pippin II and Plectrude.<sup>302</sup> It is unlikely Heden's fault was a lack of piety or Christianity; rather, his 'fault' was being a peripheral leader who resisted Charles Martel's authority.<sup>303</sup> Likewise, before Boniface was able to accomplish anything in Bavaria, it was necessary for him to convince *dux* Odilo and his followers to abandon their 'evil, false and heretical' beliefs.<sup>304</sup> Yet it was Odilo who had invited Boniface into Bavaria in the first place, as Willibald admits, and organised Christianity had been developing there since the end of the seventh century, so it seems unlikely heresy was as widespread as Willibald would

<sup>300</sup> Kehl, *Kult und Nachleben*, pp. 72-3.

<sup>301</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 4.

<sup>302</sup> Wood, 'Before or After Mission', pp. 155-7; see also Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 62-3.

<sup>303</sup> On Heden, his family and their place in Frankish politics, see H. Mordek, 'Die Hedenen als Politische Kraft im Austrasischen Frankenreich', in J. Jarnut, U. Nonn and M. Richter (eds), *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit* (Sigmaringen, 1994), pp. 343-66; Wood, 'Before or After Mission', pp. 157-8. See also Fouracre, *Charles Martel*, pp. 113-4.

<sup>304</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 7.

have us believe.<sup>305</sup> In fact, these men were chosen as antagonists by Willibald not because they had opposed Boniface necessarily, but because they were opponents of Charles Martel and his sons.

But these are not the same antagonists we encounter in Boniface's letters, nor do any of those allegedly lax bishops whom Boniface bemoaned appear in the *Vita*. In having Boniface opposed by Radbod and Heden and having him correct the heresies of Odilo, though, Willibald was showing Boniface had been opposed by those same men who were seen as outsiders: Radbod, the pagan enemy of Charles Martel; Odilo, the Bavarian *dux* who seduced Charles's daughter and betrayed his sons. Admittedly, Heden does not appear in the historical sources, his absence implies he opposed Charles Martel, and was probably an ally of his fellow patron of Echternach, Charles's enemy Plectrude.

Here, then, Willibald was clearly presenting Boniface for a Carolingian audience, with a Carolingian perception of the otherness of peripheral peoples who engaged in unacceptable practices. Rather than focussing on the Frankish bishops whom Boniface despised, but who were part of Willibald's audience, he focussed on figures that were universally reviled. But he further supplemented this focus by highlighting Boniface's cooperation with the Frankish episcopate. This was not falsehood, although it was a rather selective reading of Boniface's career. The end of Chapter Seven and the beginning of Chapter Eight of the *Vita* focus specifically on Boniface as the reformer of the Frankish Church. Here we see Boniface working to restore the Frankish Church to correct practices in concert with Carloman and Pippin, but also, more importantly, with his fellow bishops. Again, this reflects Lull's position as a member of reforming church councils while reinforcing Boniface's place in the community. By supplementing his defamation of secular Carolingian opponents with this depiction of Boniface's centrality to the reform movement, Willibald made the Anglo-Saxon outsider central to Frankish religion and politics.

One final point is necessary to confirm Willibald succeeded in his task. According to *ARF*, when Pippin III was anointed king of the Franks, it was none other than Boniface who performed the ceremony.<sup>306</sup> *ARF* are the only source to

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<sup>305</sup> On the progress of Christianity in Bavaria before Boniface's arrival, see Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, pp. 147-9; Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 145-62.

<sup>306</sup> *ARF*, c.a. 750.

mention this aspect of the coronation, though, and no text associated with Boniface, whether the saint's own letters or the later *Lives*, even hints at it. There has, therefore, been much speculation by historians as to whether Boniface was involved in the coronation.<sup>307</sup> Regardless of whether Boniface did take part in the coronation, his importance to the early Carolingians cannot be denied. Charlemagne was a supporter of Lull's development of the cult,<sup>308</sup> and his father Pippin supported Boniface's work both during the saint's life and after his death. Hence we can conclude, with James Palmer, by the time the *ARF*-author came to write about Pippin's accession and coronation, Boniface and his Anglo-Saxon associates were important enough to help legitimise the coup, even if only retrospectively.<sup>309</sup> In this sense, then, Willibald accomplished his aim with the *Vita Bonifatii*; he turned an itinerant Anglo-Saxon outsider, albeit one with a great deal of prestige to his name, into a hero-martyr who a Carolingian audience would recognise as one of their own; someone who was part of their community.

#### 2.4.2 Defining paganism

While pagans feature in Willibald's *Vita Bonifatii*, and the Saxons were accused of practicing paganism along with being rebellious in the annals, there are few explicit references in such texts to the practices involved in 'paganism'. Yet the fact pagans and paganism are targeted in the texts is revealing, and highlights a wider context of increasing concern with the relationship between the Carolingian community and the pagans in the second half of the eighth century, which was informed as much by the Anglo-Saxon missionaries as it was by Frankish wars of expansion. The eighth century witnessed various attempts to define paganism, and so we possess several non-narrative sources that provide a window into what early Carolingian churchmen thought pagans were doing. The most important point to note is the authors of the texts containing supposed 'pagan' practices often blended what we would think of as paganism, heresy, superstition and folk beliefs, usually without distinguishing between such categories, making such 'definitions' somewhat unsatisfactory to a

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<sup>307</sup> Recently, both Wallace-Hadrill and Wood have allowed for the possibility, while Rosamond McKitterick, has thoroughly rejected the idea. See Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, p. 157; Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 292; R. McKitterick, 'The Illusion of Royal Power in the Carolingian Annals', *The English Historical Review*, 115 (2000), 1-20, at pp. 15-6.

<sup>308</sup> Palmer, 'Bishop Lull', p. 270.

<sup>309</sup> Palmer, 'Saxon or European?', p. 857.

modern audience.<sup>310</sup> In other words, what was happening in the eighth century was not so much an effort to provide a definition of paganism *per se*; rather, it was an effort to provide a definition of what beliefs and practices were considered unacceptable in the Carolingian world. For our purpose, though, it is still possible to refer to this as a definition of paganism, because this is how contemporaries saw it, or at least presented it.

The first efforts to define paganism in the eighth century came from the circle of Boniface. In 742, Boniface and Carloman held a synod of the churches of the eastern part of the Frankish kingdom: the decrees survive in the collection of Boniface's correspondence.<sup>311</sup> While the synod appears primarily to have been concerned with regulating the behaviour of bishops and other members of the clergy who were acting inappropriately, the decrees also include a notable passage forbidding the performance of pagan rites in churches. There is no detail about the specifics of these rites, but they apparently included: sacrifices to the dead (*sacrificia mortuorum*); casting of lots and divinations (*sortilegos vel divinos*); phylacteries and auguries (*filacteria et auguria*); incantations (*incantationes*); offerings of animals (*immolaticias*); and 'those sacrilegious fires which they call Niedfeor' (*illos sacrilegos ignes, quos niedfeor vocant*).

To this list we can add the information found in the so-called *Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum*,<sup>312</sup> a document that has long been linked to Carloman and Boniface's synods: this link is based on the use of similar language and ideas about pagan rites in both sources. The *Indiculus* contains what appears to be a list of chapter headings for topics of discussion at church councils. Unfortunately, whatever discussions took place have not survived, but the headings themselves are intriguing. Among the thirty items we find some that have direct counterparts in the passage just referenced: 'sacrilege at the graves of the dead' (*De sacrilegio ad sepulchra mortuorum*) and 'sacrilege upon the dead' (*De sacrilegio super defunctos*);<sup>313</sup> 'phylacteries' (*De filacteriis*);<sup>314</sup> 'incantations' (*De incantationibus*);<sup>315</sup> 'auguries' (*De auguriis*);<sup>316</sup> 'divination and the casting of lots'

<sup>310</sup> Wood, 'Pagan Religions', p. 161.

<sup>311</sup> Boniface, *Epistolae*, 56.

<sup>312</sup> *Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum*, ed. A Boretius, *MGH Cap*, 1 (Hanover, 1883).

<sup>313</sup> *Indiculus superstitionum*, 1-2.

<sup>314</sup> *Indiculus superstitionum*, 10.

<sup>315</sup> *Indiculus superstitionum*, 12.

<sup>316</sup> *Indiculus superstitionum*, 13.

(*De divinis vel sortilogis*);<sup>317</sup> and ‘fire from the rubbing of wood, that is *nodfyr*’ (*De igne fricato de ligno id est nodfyr*).<sup>318</sup>

The *Indiculus* also adds further details for some of the vaguer practices. We learn, for example, the ‘sacrilege upon the dead’ was called *dadsisas*, and the ‘auguries’ somehow involved the excrement and sneezing of birds, horses and cattle.<sup>319</sup> The kind of syncretism to which the synodal decrees seem to refer also has an apparent parallel in ‘the sacrifices done to some of the saints’ (*De sacrificio quod alicui sanctorum*)<sup>320</sup> and *De petendo quod boni vocant sanctae Mariae*.<sup>321</sup> The *Indiculus* contains many more practices, some of which seem familiar to the modern concept of paganism – ‘rites of the forests’ (*De sacris siluarum*),<sup>322</sup> ‘springs of sacrifices’ (*De fontibus sacrificiorum*)<sup>323</sup> – and others whose significance we can barely guess at – ‘brains of animals’ (*De cerebro animalium*),<sup>324</sup> ‘storms, horns and snails’ shells’ (*De tempestatibus et cornibus et cocleis*).<sup>325</sup>

While the support for such attempts at the definition of unacceptable beliefs was only just beginning to emerge in the 740s, reforming ideas and the concept of *correctio* became much more dominant during the reign of Carloman’s nephew Charlemagne. This was probably primarily due to Charlemagne’s long-term dedication to the conquest of the Saxons, which involved not only their political subjugation but also their conversion to Christianity. That this context saw continuing efforts to define unacceptable beliefs and clarify orthodoxy should not surprise us. The influence of Boniface’s reforming synods can be seen particularly clearly in two of Charlemagne’s documents relating to the governance of Saxony.

The first of these, the *Admonitio generalis* composed in 789,<sup>326</sup> is essentially a list of what various members of the clergy and monastic communities should and

<sup>317</sup> *Indiculus superstitionum*, 14.

<sup>318</sup> *Indiculus superstitionum*, 15.

<sup>319</sup> *Indiculus superstitionum*, 13, ‘*De auguriis vel avium vel equorum vel bovum stercora vel sternutationes*’.

<sup>320</sup> *Indiculus superstitionum*, 9.

<sup>321</sup> *Indiculus superstitionum*, 19. Note, Boretius suggested substituting *petenstro* for *petendo*, which would render the translation ‘Concerning the bed straw which the good call holy Mary’s’; Boretius, p. 223 n. 11. This apparently relates to a medieval custom, associated with the Virgin Mary, of placing bundles of herbs in cribs of infants to protect from harm. See Clay, *Shadow of Death*, pp. 290-1; H.E. Davidson, *Roles of the Northern Goddess* (London, 1998), p. 155.

<sup>322</sup> *Indiculus superstitionum*, 6.

<sup>323</sup> *Indiculus superstitionum*, 11.

<sup>324</sup> *Indiculus superstitionum*, 16.

<sup>325</sup> *Indiculus superstitionum*, 22.

<sup>326</sup> *Admonitio generalis*, ed. A. Boretius, *MGH Cap*, 1 (Hanover, 1883).



should not do, largely following the church councils of Late Antiquity, but also inspired by the Old Testament. One item in the *Admonitio* that explicitly draws upon the authority of the Old Testament provides our clearest link to the Bonifatian documents. Invoking the bans on auguries in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, the *Admonitio* places a ban on the appointment of *calculatores*, *incantores*, *tempestarii* and *obligatores*, who should be ‘corrected and condemned wherever they are’.<sup>327</sup> The passage goes on to state the practice of placing candles at trees, rocks and springs and other rites that occur at these places should be ‘removed and destroyed wherever they are found’. That such a command should appear in a document otherwise concerned with the correct behaviour of Christians is clearly telling of the mind-set of its authors.

The second revealing document relating to the governance of Saxony is the *Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae*, composed probably around 792.<sup>328</sup> Like the *Admonitio*, the *Capitulatio* contains provisions for the correct behaviour of Christians, but also contains more ‘secular’ provisions, such as ordering the death of anyone guilty of being disloyal to the king, of raping the daughter of his lord, or of killing his lord or lady. Perhaps inevitably, though, the *Capitulatio* also contains provisions for the punishment of those found guilty of being pagans, or at least of continuing to practice pagan rites. Thus, the document orders death for those committing the following crimes: eating meat during Lent ‘out of contempt for Christianity’; eating the burnt flesh of a man or woman killed for being a witch (*strigam*), or giving it to another to eat ‘according to the custom of the pagans’; cremation of the dead ‘according to pagan rite’; ‘lurking among the Saxons wishing to hide unbaptised and disdaining to come to baptism wishing to remain a pagan’; ‘sacrificing to the Devil and offering sacrificial victims to demons in the manner of the pagans’; ‘forming a plan with pagans against Christians or wishing to remain with them in adversity to Christians.’ It is here we see most clearly the blurring of the line between religious orthodoxy and political loyalty, which reflects the way the Saxons are treated in the annals where betrayal of loyalty to the Franks usually goes hand-in-hand with abandoning Christianity.

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<sup>327</sup> *Admonitio generalis*, 65, referring to Leviticus, xix.26; Deuteronomy, xviii.10-11.

<sup>328</sup> *Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae*, ed. A Boretius, *MGH Cap*, 1 (Hanover, 1883).

When considering how eighth-century churchmen defined paganism, we must also address the so-called *interpretatio Romana*. This is the idea ‘Germanic’ pagan practices and beliefs were reconfigured to fit with what was known of classical Greco-Roman paganism, as transmitted by the Church Fathers of Late Antiquity. In fact, the *interpretatio Romana* goes back at least as far as Tacitus, who claimed the Germani worshipped Mercury as their chief god.<sup>329</sup> According to this concept, when early-medieval churchmen learnt of ‘Germanic’ gods, like Woden or Thunor for example, they ‘translated’ these deities as Mercury or Jupiter, who had similar traits and associations to their ‘Germanic’ counterparts. Perhaps the best known example of this is Gregory of Tours’s claim Clovis I worshipped Saturn, Jupiter, Mars and Mercury.<sup>330</sup> There are several examples from the eighth century. The *Indiculus* mentions the rites and feast days of Jupiter and Mercury,<sup>331</sup> while in a letter to Boniface, Gregory III mentioned the possibility of Christian priests who were still worshipping Jupiter,<sup>332</sup> and one of the late eighth-century Pseudo-Bonifatian sermons mentions ‘rocks, springs and trees of Jupiter and Mercury or other pagan gods.’<sup>333</sup>

Perhaps the most frequently discussed of such *interpretationes* is Willibald’s report of Boniface’s felling of the ‘Oak of Jupiter’ at Geismar, an event that served as a centrepiece for his *Vita Bonifatii*.<sup>334</sup> The name *robor Iobis* has generally been seen by historians as referring to an oak that was actually dedicated to Thor/Donar/Thunaer,<sup>335</sup> although Wallace-Hadrill thought the oak probably dedicated to Woden:<sup>336</sup> this may fit with his statement that before their conversion the Franks worshipped either Woden or ‘a god remarkably like him’.<sup>337</sup> Yet Willibald says the pagans themselves called the tree the Oak of Jupiter, and Boniface, Gregory III and their contemporaries apparently thought there were pagans in Germania who worshipped a deity of this name, possibly along with one called Mercury. Did the pagans of Geismar really worship Jupiter? Did Willibald

<sup>329</sup> Tacitus, *De Origine et situ Germanorum*, ed. A. Önnorfors (Stuttgart, 1983), 9.

<sup>330</sup> *DLH*, ii.29. Note, Gregory is referencing Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

<sup>331</sup> *Indiculus superstitionum*, 8, 20.

<sup>332</sup> Boniface, *Epistolae*, 28.

<sup>333</sup> *Sermones Pseudo-Bonifatii*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 89, cols 843-72, 6.

<sup>334</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 6.

<sup>335</sup> For example, Levison, *England and the Continent*, pp. 75-6; Shieffer, *Winfrid-Bonifatius*, p. 148; Clay, *Shadow of Death*, p 287-8 with n. 38. On the relationship between Donar and Jupiter, see K. Helm, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, 2 vols (Heidelberg, 1953), vol. 2, pp. 245-6.

<sup>336</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, p. 152.

<sup>337</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, p. 22.

think they worshipped Jupiter, when actually they worshipped a more recognisably ‘Germanic’ god? Or was it simply convenient for his pagans to worship Jupiter?

Willibald’s phraseology undeniably serves to place the pagans and their beliefs in opposition to Boniface, but he did not necessarily need to name a specific god in order to this. It is also undeniable, however, the eighth-century missionaries were well aware their late antique predecessors had dealt with the problem of paganism, and they clearly thought there was more than a passing connection between the paganism of the fifth-century Mediterranean and that of eighth-century Germania. In a letter to Pope Zacharias, Boniface displays his reliance on Caesarius of Arles (misidentified as Augustine), whom he quotes to show the evils of ‘sacrilegious rites’ such as ‘incantations or diviners or soothsayers or amulets or any kind of prophecies’, a list that is strikingly similar to those found in the documents already discussed.<sup>338</sup>

But before assuming every reference to Jupiter or Mercury or to incantations and auguries in the eighth-century sources meant the author was relying on the Church Fathers or was happy to categorise pagan practices using terminology at least three centuries old and geographically displaced from its point of origin, we should remember the difficulties modern scholars face in understanding early medieval paganism.<sup>339</sup> Several scholars have highlighted the difficulties of using individual references to so-called Germanic gods and beliefs – often separated by significant chronological and geographical spaces – to create a perception of a widespread, pan-Germanic paganism stretching from the Rhine to Scandinavia and from the Migration period to the Viking age.<sup>340</sup> Instead, ‘Germanic paganism’ (insofar as we can speak of it as a single thing) should be seen as highly regionalised, with pagans worshipping their own local gods such as the Frisian Fosite,<sup>341</sup> the (presumably) Saxon Saxnot,<sup>342</sup> or the Alamannian/Lombard Wodan,<sup>343</sup> albeit doing so in a syncretic way which was open to outside influences.

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<sup>338</sup> Boniface, *Epistolae*, 50. See Palmer, ‘Defining Paganism’, pp. 407-8.

<sup>339</sup> See, for example, Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, pp. 18-19; Wood, ‘Pagan Religions’; Palmer, ‘Defining Paganism’.

<sup>340</sup> The first significant study of this kind was Helm, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*. See also, D.H. Green, *Language and History in the Early Germanic World* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 13-29; Shaw, *Uses of Wodan*; P. Shaw, *Pagan Goddesses in the Early Germanic World: Eostre, Hreda and the Cult of Matrons* (London, 2011).

<sup>341</sup> Helm, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, pp. 271-2.

<sup>342</sup> Helm, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, pp. 240-1.

<sup>343</sup> Helm, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, pp. 251-68; Shaw, *Uses of Wodan*, pp. 72-128.

The *interpretatio Romana* is in many ways equally as unhelpful as attempting to present a unified vision of paganism because it encourages an over-reliance on the idea early medieval churchmen had little, if any interest in the realities of paganism.<sup>344</sup> With that in mind, let us reconsider the evidence already examined. On one hand, eighth-century churchmen clearly had at least a passing familiarity with the genuine beliefs of their pagan contemporaries. The reference to *niedfyr/nodfyr* in both the synod of 742 and *Indiculus superstitionum* is particularly telling, especially since it seems to relate to a practice that survived into the twentieth century.<sup>345</sup> These churchmen also knew the names of other pagan rites: they knew a rite involving the dead was called ‘*dadsisas*’; they knew the ‘rites of the forest’ were called ‘*nimidas*’; and they knew of some sort of race called ‘*yrias*’.<sup>346</sup> These are only the most specific examples of the rites found in the *Indiculus* that have no obvious counterpart in late antique sources; others have been mentioned above. Likewise, the so-called ‘Old Saxon Baptismal Vow’ which accompanies the *Indiculus* in its only surviving manuscript and also comes from the eighth century, calls upon the baptised to reject gods called Thunaer, Woden and Saxnot.<sup>347</sup> On the other hand, we have Willibald’s *robor Iobis*, the feast days of Jupiter and Mercury mentioned in the *Indiculus* and the rocks, springs and trees of Jupiter and Mercury (and other pagan gods) mentioned in the Pseudo-Bonifatian decretals. *Interpretatio Romana* would appear to explain these latter references, but why would missionaries and other who were genuinely concerned with the conversion of pagans in Saxony rely on inaccurate or irrelevant information when listing unacceptable practices when they clearly knew at least something of what was really going on?

In fact, we have no way of knowing the pagans of Hesse were not worshipping a god they called Jupiter at an oak dedicated to him. Likewise, just because incantations, auguries and other practices appear in sources from the fourth and fifth centuries does not make their appearance in sources from the eighth century any less genuine. Wallace-Hadrill, who was so convinced the Franks

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<sup>344</sup> For example, Palmer ‘Defining Paganism’.

<sup>345</sup> For discussion of the Germanic ‘need-fire’, see Clay, *Shadow of Death*, pp. 289-90.

<sup>346</sup> It must be noted Boretius suggested reading *frias* for *yrias*, and thus seeing the race as dedicated to Freya; Boretius, p. 223 n. 17.

<sup>347</sup> *Interrogationes et Responsiones Baptismales*, ed. A. Boretius, *MGH Cap*, 1 (Hanover, 1883): ‘*end ec forsacho allum dioboles uuercum and uuordum thunaer ende woden ende saxnote.*’ For discussion, see M. Mostert, ‘Communicating the Faith. The Circle of Boniface, Germanic Vernaculars, and the Frisian and Saxon Converts’, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik*, 70 (2003), 87-130.

worshipped ‘Germanic’ gods, also entertained the possibility of the existence of syncretic beliefs in Germania that had been influenced by past exposure to Roman culture.<sup>348</sup> Indeed, a bronze Roman figurine apparently of the Greco-Egyptian god Harpocrates has been uncovered at Geismar itself, and while it is impossible to completely disagree with the suggestion this was reimagined as a deity of more local significance,<sup>349</sup> it still reminds us of the close contacts between Roman and Germanic society, and the cultural transmissions which could take place through such contacts.<sup>350</sup> This is not to suggest *interpretatio Romana* did not occur or medieval churchmen were not guilty of simplifying their presentations of paganism when it suited them, but given what we have seen from the sources, we must allow for the possibility they knew what they were talking about when they mentioned pagans in Germania worshipping Jupiter.

## 2.5 Conclusion

We have now seen Carolingian authors had a much stronger sense than did their Merovingian predecessors that non-Franks, and especially non-Christians, were in some way ‘other’. This is clearest in the often incredibly hostile depictions of peripheral leaders and peoples found in Carolingian sources, which do not have counterparts in the Merovingian sources. This perception of the ‘otherness’ of peripheral peoples and leaders rested on their refusal to accept Carolingian rule or to convert to Christianity, although this was an incredibly complex cultural perception, the details of which varied from author to author. Crucially, though, this appears to have been an attempt to paint the Frankish world as straightforwardly black and white, divided between the loyal, orthodox Franks in the community and the rebels and pagans outside it. Even so, we can find in the sources an implicit (and perhaps sometimes unconscious) acknowledgement that, in an ideal situation, the outsiders would be part of the community. Indeed, the purpose of both missionary efforts and wars of expansion aimed at the integration of outsiders into the community, so this was a discourse that inherently involved both the construction and deconstruction of a sense of otherness. Peripheral peoples were other only so long as they refused to accept Carolingian authority and Christianity; once these principles were accepted,

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<sup>348</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>349</sup> Clay, *Shadow of Death*, p.133.

<sup>350</sup> See Green, *Language and History*, pp. 219-35.

integration into the community could take place: it is for this reason authors targeted scapegoats on whom they could blame rebellions.

What we have here, then, is a very temporal sense of otherness: in many cases authors were writing about peoples that had already been integrated, but the fact they had been outsiders in the past lingered on. This may have been a result of the continued importance of one barrier that apparently could not be broken: ethnic and regional identities. For all Carolingians emphasised a shared Christianity within the community, Frankish ethnic identity was still central, and the Carolingian empire remained above all a Frankish empire, ruled by a Frankish dynasty. The fact the Carolingians attempted to define the relationship between Franks more clearly in terms of loyalty to their own dynasty did little to break down ethnic barriers, and no concept of empire-wide citizenship comparable to that utilised by the Romans developed over the course of the eighth and ninth centuries. As much as Einhard would have his audience believe otherwise, Saxons (for example) could not become *unus populus* with the Franks, because they could not become Franks, and the continuing importance of ethnic and regional identities proved as decisive factor against the long-term cohesion of the Carolingian Empire as the division of 843.

## Chapter 3

### The Frisians and the *regnum Francorum*

#### 3.1 The Frisians in the Frankish World

As a pagan people living on the border of the Frankish kingdoms, and like the Franks inhabiting land on both sides of the River Rhine, we might expect the Frisians to have a central place in Frankish historiography, especially since they had featured in Roman sources concerning the area. But from a modern perspective the Frisians are notably absent from sources written before the late seventh century.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, as Bazelmans has shown, there is a hiatus of over 300 years between the last Roman reference to Frisians and the first Frankish reference to them in 580.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, this reference comes not from a Frank, but from the Italian poet Venantius Fortunatus, who included them in a list of peoples in whom Chilperic I inspired fear.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, Fortunatus's contemporary Gregory of Tours mentions them neither when discussing Hygelac's raid, which took place in the area we might expect to find Frisians, nor in any other part of his works.<sup>4</sup> Bazelmans has argued the implications of archaeological work show there was massive, if not complete depopulation of the area in the third and fourth centuries. This would mean by the sixth century there were no peoples in the region who referred to themselves as Frisians.<sup>5</sup> Instead, the re-introduction of the name came from the Franks, who simply borrowed an antique ethnographic label for the peoples of the Lower Rhine, and applied it to those who lived there in their own day; Fortunatus certainly provides a compelling link in the chain through which the Franks would have acquired such a term.<sup>6</sup> By this argument, the term would then have been appropriated by the target group.

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<sup>1</sup> For what follows see J. Bazelmans, 'The Early-Medieval Use of Ethnic Names from Classical Antiquity: The Case of the Frisians', in T. Derks and N. Roymans, (eds.), *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity: The Role of Power and Tradition* (Amsterdam, 2009), pp. 321-337.

<sup>2</sup> There had been a slightly earlier mention of Frisians by Procopius, which need not concern us here; Bazelmans, 'The Case of the Frisians', p. 329.

<sup>3</sup> Venantius Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica*, ed. F. Leo, *MGH AA*, 4, 1, ix.1.

<sup>4</sup> *DLH*, iii.3 for Hygelac's raid.

<sup>5</sup> Bazelmans, 'The Case of the Frisians', pp. 322-7.

<sup>6</sup> Bazelmans, 'The Case of the Frisians', p. 331.

This was certainly the case by the end of the seventh century, when the Frisian rulers Aldgisl and Radbod appear in the sources. Nevertheless, it is impossible to determine how much authority the seventh-century Merovingians wielded over the Frisians.<sup>7</sup> We should not over-emphasise the independence of the Frisians or other peripheral peoples in the late Merovingian period – or even their desire for independence – even if we should also not make the case the Frankish kings of this period wielded the same authority east of the Rhine as their predecessors had done. Far from enjoying independence from Frankish rule, Radbod's rule in Frisia witnessed the beginning of a phase of aggressive interactions between the Frisians and the Pippinid-Carolingians, which began with the wars between Pippin II and Radbod in the 690s and culminated in the integration of Frisia into the growing Frankish Empire.

Yet just because the Franks used the blanket terms 'Frisians' and 'Frisia' to refer to the area around and to the north of the mouth of the Rhine does not mean this was a coherent unit, either politically or geographically. A definite border with, or materially different culture from Saxony is difficult to determine,<sup>8</sup> as are the borders between these two regions and Austrasia. The blurring of the lines between Frisia and Saxony did not disappear during the ninth century, as shown by the trans-regional dioceses of Bremen and Münster (the latter founded by the Frisian missionary Liudger).<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the Frisians and Saxons were even seen by some as 'mixed together'.<sup>10</sup> Geographically speaking the area is somewhat more distinct if divided into two sub-regions, something only Bede of all our early medieval authors did. While the area adjacent to Austrasia and dominated by Utrecht and Dorestad, which Bede referred to as *Frisia citerior*,<sup>11</sup> was geographically similar to northern

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<sup>7</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 160-1.

<sup>8</sup> D. Meier, 'The North Sea Coastal Area: Settlement History from Roman to Early Medieval Times', in D.H. Green and F. Siegmund (eds.), *The Continental Saxons from the Migration Period to the Tenth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 37-66, at pp. 50-1.

<sup>9</sup> For Bremen, see *Vita sancti Willehadi*, ed. A. Poncelott, AASS 8<sup>th</sup> Nov., vol. 3 (Brussels, 1910), 8; For Münster, see *Vita Liudgeri*, i.24.

<sup>10</sup> See the charter of Lothar I preserved in Rudolf and Meginhard of Fulda, *Translatio sancti Alexandri*, 4: '*commixta*.' See also Wood, 'Before or After Mission'; I.N. Wood, 'Beyond Satraps and Ostriches: Political and Social Structures of the Saxons in the Early Carolingian Period', in D.H. Green, and F. Siegmund (eds.), *The Continental Saxons from the Migration Period to the Tenth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 271-98, at pp. 278-80; J.T. Palmer, 'Beyond Frankish Authority? The Frisians Between Anglo-Saxons and Carolingians', in H. Sauer and J. Story (eds), *Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent* (Arizona, 2011), pp. 139-162.

<sup>11</sup> Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, ed. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1969), v.10.



Francia,<sup>12</sup> the area to the north of the Rhine was quite different, being composed of hill-settlements known as *terpen* (or *wierden*) which stretched across the modern-day northern Netherlands, north-eastern Germany and southern Denmark. These *terpen* provided the only areas of permanently habitable land in a region dominated by salt marshes which were periodically submerged by rivers, lakes and tidal flooding, at least before the building of dikes from around 1200.<sup>13</sup> The significance of this difference in geography is southern Frisia easily came under Frankish domination after Radbod's death in 719. Northern Frisia – *Frisia ulterior* – on the other hand, was only fully subjected after 785 and the submission of the Saxon leader Widukind, who had some influence in the region, as we shall see; the *terpen* and the tides must have played at least as big a part in this difficulty as Frisian paganism did.

What will concern us in this chapter, though, is not the narrative of either the conquest or the conversion of Frisia.<sup>14</sup> Instead, we will focus on the place of the Frisians in the political and religious discourses of the early Carolingian period, in other words how they were depicted in the sources of the eighth and early ninth centuries.<sup>15</sup> Most of these sources are Frankish in origin, and those that are not tend at least to have what we can call a Frankish perspective, in that they represent contemporary Frankish thought in some way. The authors of our historical sources were almost certainly all Franks who had some connection to the Frankish royal court. The hagiographers tended to be non-Franks – primarily Anglo-Saxons or Frisians – but their audience understood the Frankish context the saints worked in, and so the sources should be seen as representing Frankish religious thought. There were also two Anglo-Saxon authors who dealt with Frisia in texts written for an initially Anglo-Saxon audience. Bede included information about the Frisian missions of Wilfrid and Willibrord in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, but his use of the clearly Frankish phrase *Frisia citerior* and his Christian subject matter, which

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<sup>12</sup> H.A. Heidinga, *Frisia in the First Millennium: An Outline*, ed. J. Bazelmans and D. Gerrets (Utrecht, 1997), pp. 38-44.

<sup>13</sup> Heidinga, *Frisia*, pp. 35-8.

<sup>14</sup> For which, see Heidinga, *Frisia*, pp. 18-24; Levison, *England and the Continent*, pp. 49-65; Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, pp. 143-7.

<sup>15</sup> Because of this focus, we must also leave aside the issue of the Frisians as traders in the early medieval North Sea world. This topic has been addressed particularly comprehensively by S. Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut Moyen Age*, 2 vols (Lille, 1983). See also, Heidinga, *Frisia*, pp. 27-32.

favours Willibrord and Pippin II over Radbod, mean even he was part of a wider discourse which both influenced and was influenced by Frankish ideology.<sup>16</sup> Stephen of Ripon also mentioned Frisia in his *Vita Wilfridi* when dealing with Wilfrid's continental exploits.<sup>17</sup> As we have seen in previous chapters, this source actually contains information about and interpretations of Frankish matters not found in any contemporary Frankish sources, and so we should not separate it from having continental interests or appeal.

We will begin by looking at representations of the individual Frisian for whom we have the best evidence: Radbod. As we shall see, this evidence is not always uniform or conclusive in the picture it paints, but it allows us to see how Radbod was perceived by those living in the century after his death, during which time he achieved something of a central position in both historical and hagiographical narratives. This status was achieved due to Radbod's very nature; he was a Frisian pagan who was intimately involved in the political conflicts of the Franks, thus placing him in that ambiguous position between member of the community and outsider. The *LHF*-author, who lived through these conflicts, certainly had little sympathy for the Frisian ruler, while for Fredegar's continuator and the *AMP*-author, looking back on the origins of Carolingian dominance, his relationship with the Franks made him something of a model for the relationship between the Franks and their peripheries. Radbod's paganism and political dominance of Frisia at the time when the Frisian mission was beginning also made him a point of discussion for those writing about the missionaries, and he thus features heavily in the hagiographical materials concerned with the Frisian mission. Yet depictions of him in these sources are neither straight-forward nor one-dimensional. While he could be portrayed as an idolater and a persecutor, as he was in *Vita Bonifatii*, he could also be portrayed as a more reasonable leader with whom the missionaries negotiated the progress of their work. It is this Radbod we see hinted at in *Vita Willibrordi*, and more explicitly in *Vita Vulframni*.<sup>18</sup>

Once we have established Radbod's place in early Carolingian political and religious thought we will turn to the place of the Frisians themselves. This is slightly harder to access, because the Frisians are largely absent from the historical

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<sup>16</sup> On the Frankish origin of the term *Frisia citerior* see Bazelmans, 'The Case of the Frisians', p. 331.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi*, 27. See Palmer, 'Wilfrid and the Frisians', pp. 231-42.

<sup>18</sup> *Vita Vulframni*, ed. W. Levison, *MGH SRM* 5 (Hanover, 1910).

narratives in their accounts of events between the Battle of the Boorne in 734 and the Danish invasion of 810, with the annals instead focussing on other political opponents, as we have seen. Yet because of the importance of the Frisian mission as the base from which other missions east of the Rhine progressed, the Frisians continued to feature heavily in the hagiography, especially since the Frisians themselves began to contribute to this genre from the beginning of the ninth century. Thus we have rich portrayals of the eighth-century Frisians, ranging from the vicious murderers of *Vita Bonifatii* to the tide-worshipping pagans of *Vita Liudgeri* and *Vita Vulframni*, to the bizarre metaphors of *Vita altera Bonifatii*.<sup>19</sup> Yet these portrayals were not simply depictions of a pagan Other. As the target of the mission, the Frisians became a tool through which the very nature of missionary work could be debated; the interactions between saint and pagans in a text show us each author's own views on exactly how the conversion of non-Christians should be carried out, and so we see the emergence of a highly ambiguous depiction of the Frisians and their paganism.

### 3.2 Radbod of Frisia

Radbod was undoubtedly the most active of the early medieval Frisian rulers, and the one for whom we have the best evidence, although even this can be frustratingly inconclusive. While we are aware of his predecessor, Aldgisl, little is known about him beyond his hostility to the Frankish mayor Ebroin, as reported by Stephen of Ripon in his *Vita Wilfridi*,<sup>20</sup> although even this does not tell us much, as Ebroin seems to have been hated by almost everyone.<sup>21</sup> Radbod became ruler of Frisia at some point in the 680s; exactly when is uncertain, and, while he is generally presented as a king by modern scholarship, the title he used was a matter of debate even for near-contemporaries, as we shall see. Around 692 Radbod fought a war with Pippin II in which he was defeated and came to terms.<sup>22</sup> Another war followed in around 697, and this brought almost twenty years of peace between Francia and Frisia.<sup>23</sup> At some point during this period of peace Radbod became intimately tied to

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<sup>19</sup> *Vita altera Bonifatii*, ed. W. Levison, *MGH SRG* 57 (Hanover, 1905).

<sup>20</sup> Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi*, 27.

<sup>21</sup> For other contemporary hostility towards Ebroin see *LHF*, 45-7; *Passio Leudegarii*, 5, 18-9, 21-7, 30-5.

<sup>22</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 692.

<sup>23</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 697.

the Frankish world through the marriage of his daughter, Theudesinda, to Pippin's son Grimoald.<sup>24</sup> As we have seen, Grimoald's son and successor as Neustrian mayor was named Theudoald, indicating he was Theudesinda's son, and thus Radbod's grandson.<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, though, all three of the historical sources that mention these events call Theudoald the son of an unnamed concubine, and only *AMP* place his birth after Grimoald's marriage.<sup>26</sup> It is also worth pointing out Grimoald and Theudoald shared their names with two sons of Pippin II's contemporary, Theodo of Bavaria, suggesting a political relationship may have been the reason for their names.<sup>27</sup>

At around this time, the Northumbrian Willibrord was beginning his missionary activity in the area, and the Frankish victories over the Frisian pagans almost certainly aided his progress. But following Pippin's death in 714 Francia was plunged into civil war, a war which drew in Radbod and the Frisians, who fought on the side of the Neustrians, against Pippin's wife Plectrude and their grandson Theudoald.<sup>28</sup> If Theudoald was indeed also Radbod's grandson, this would have been a massive blow for Plectrude and her cause, but as we suggested in the previous chapter, the alliance should probably be seen in the context of a more widespread anti-Pippinid sentiment across the Frankish world at this time.<sup>29</sup> Radbod remained the ally of the Neustrians in their war against Pippin's son Charles Martel. During this war, Radbod inflicted on Charles the only defeat the latter suffered in his life, although it did not affect his long-term success.<sup>30</sup> The Christian missionaries were also drawn into this period of hostility, with Willibrord's support in particular proving crucial to Charles's cause.<sup>31</sup> Radbod supposedly instigated a persecution and exile of the Christian missionaries, which by now included Boniface,<sup>32</sup> although given his alliance with the Neustrians this may have been less a pagan persecution

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<sup>24</sup> *LHF*, 50, is the only source to name Theudesinda.

<sup>25</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 269-70. On Theudoald and his position in Charles Martel's Francia, see R. Collins, 'Deception and Misrepresentation in Early Eighth Century Frankish Historiography', in J. Jarnut, U. Nonn and M. Richter (eds), *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit* (Sigmaringen, 1994), pp. 227-47, at pp. 229-35.

<sup>26</sup> *LHF*, 49-50; *Continuaciones*, 6-7; *AMP*, s.a. 711, 714.

<sup>27</sup> C. Hammer, *From 'Ducatus' to 'Regnum': Ruling Bavaria Under the Merovingians and Early Carolingians* (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 56-8.

<sup>28</sup> *LHF*, 51-2. See also Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 255-8, 267-70.

<sup>29</sup> Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 266.

<sup>30</sup> *LHF*, 52.

<sup>31</sup> Gerberding, '716', pp. 207-13.

<sup>32</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 4.

and more an attempt to expel Charles's supporters from the area.<sup>33</sup> While several sources imply Radbod died when he was defeated by Charles,<sup>34</sup> two sources provide more detail about the Frisian ruler's death. Altfred's *Vita Liudgeri* tells us towards the end of his life Radbod suffered from a crippling illness which led to his death:<sup>35</sup> this illness is confirmed by *Vita Vulframni*, which also gives the year of Radbod's death as 719.<sup>36</sup>

Radbod's intimate involvement in Frankish politics despite his being a pagan and a non-Frank, and his apparent persecution of Christians, meant he became something of a template in the discourse of otherness that emerged in the century after his death. Although he did not fit perfectly into the model of the rebellious peripheral leader, he was an opponent of Charles Martel, the 'rightful' Frankish ruler according to later sources, and also a would-be opponent of Christian missionaries when the opportunity presented itself, and this dual role contributed to a sense of otherness found in the sources of the eighth and early ninth centuries.

### 3.2.1 A Prototype of Political Otherness

We have already touched on Radbod's place in *LHF*, but it is worth returning to it because it provided the model upon which Fredegar's continuator and the *AMP*-author built their own narratives. Radbod appears in *LHF* as just one of the many non-Frankish leaders Pippin went to war with in the period after he established his dominance over Neustria, although the Frisian ruler's importance becomes clear when the author reports the marriage of Grimoald and Theudesinda.<sup>37</sup> Surely only the most important – and potentially troublesome – of neighbouring leaders would be worthy of such a marriage alliance. The *LHF*-author then gives us a basic outline of the role Radbod played in the civil war which followed Pippin's death; specifically he was the chief ally of the Neustrian rulers against their Austrasian opponents.<sup>38</sup> The last we hear of Radbod from the *LHF*-author is he defeated

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<sup>33</sup> Wood, 'Saint-Wandrille', p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> For example, *Vita Bonifatii*, 5; *Vita Willibrordi*, 13.

<sup>35</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.3.

<sup>36</sup> *Vita Vulframni*, 10. The date is also recorded some of the so-called minor annals; *Annales Laureshamenses, Alamannici, Nazariani*, s.a. 719.

<sup>37</sup> *LHF*, 50.

<sup>38</sup> *LHF*, 51.

Charles Martel before the latter went on to triumph over his Frankish opponents and restore peace to the *regnum Francorum*.<sup>39</sup>

Due to the brevity of the account, it is difficult to determine how the author of *LHF* felt about either Radbod personally, or the idea of Franks allying with Frisians. It is telling he disliked the idea of Franks fighting each other, and attributed the civil war to the instigation of the Devil.<sup>40</sup> As we have seen, he was well disposed towards Charles Martel, who appears as a figurehead for the reunification of the Frankish kingdoms and the resumption of the peace of Pippin's time as mayor.<sup>41</sup> Thus it is easy to imagine he would have been hostile to Radbod, and it is probably indicative he specifically refers to Radbod as a pagan (*gentilis*) in all but one instance of mentioning him. Likewise, when Radbod is given a title, it is *dux*, not *rex*, immediately making him subordinate to the Merovingian rulers of Francia, in whose name Pippin fought; later Carolingian historical authors would follow in this, although hagiographers would not. With Radbod, then, the *LHF*-author provided an example of what happened when a pagan outsider became involved in Frankish matters: an already lamentable civil war was prolonged, and the one man who could bring it to an end suffered a humiliating defeat before rallying his forces and restoring peace. While later authors writing under Charles Martel's successors did not necessarily share all aspects of this author's political outlook, they shared his positive views of Pippin II and Charles and his negative opinion of Radbod, and were able to rewrite these encounters to fit with the changing political circumstances of the mid-eighth and early ninth centuries.

Fredegar's continuator and the *AMP*-author both used this account in their narratives. Like their predecessor, they could not completely overcome the ambiguity of Radbod's situation, but they were able to place him more firmly within the discourse of otherness which emerged in the eighth century. Overall, Fredegar's continuator did little to change the *LHF*-author's account, but there are some important alterations, particularly with reference to the war between Radbod and Pippin II. The *AMP*-author, meanwhile, departed even further from *LHF*'s account, while still following the overall scheme, narrating multiple wars between Radbod

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<sup>39</sup> *LHF*, 52.

<sup>40</sup> *LHF*, 51.

<sup>41</sup> Gerberding, *Rise*, pp. 170-2.

and Pippin, and providing a much fuller account of them. The author also heaps much more praise on Charles Martel, but when analysing these changes we must bear in mind the very different contexts in which the sources were written.

The change in the *Continuations* is immediately obvious. Where *LHF* had Radbod as just one of many *principes* against whom Pippin fought and did not specify the Frisians as a target people, the *Continuations* focus specifically on Pippin's war against Radbod and the Frisians, to the exclusion of other peoples – even the Suevi which the *LHF*-author had mentioned are absent. This account includes the detail Pippin and Radbod fought a battle at Dorestad, giving an indication of the area of Radbod's powerbase.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, the *Continuations* follow *LHF*'s general outline more closely, and it is only small details that are changed, for example Grimoald's marriage to Radbod's daughter is mentioned, but she is not named.<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, the continuator retained Radbod's defeat of Charles Martel.<sup>44</sup>

Given the *AMP*-author's greatly distorted depiction of the Pippinids and their accomplishments, and denigration of the later Merovingians,<sup>45</sup> it is perhaps unsurprising this author diverged further from *LHF*'s account of these events. Like *LHF*, the *AMP*-author has Pippin fight many peoples after establishing his authority in Francia, but the later author provides a much more extensive – and probably partly fictitious – list of which peoples were fought: 'Saxons, Frisians, Alamanni, Bavarians, Aquitanians, Vascones and Bretons', at least some of whom represent the wars fought by Pippin's descendants rather than any wars Pippin himself fought, although the Alamanni are equivalent to the *LHF* author's Suevi. But this list was crucial to the *AMP*-author's conception of the late Merovingian world as politically fragmented: he specifies these were the peoples 'who formerly were subjected to the Franks'.<sup>46</sup> In other words, these were not just wars for booty; they were wars to re-establish Frankish hegemony, albeit a largely anachronistic hegemony.

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<sup>42</sup> *Continuationes*, 6: 'Pippinus contra Radbodem ducem gentilem Frigionum gentis aduersus alterutrum bellum intulerunt castro Duristate illinc belligerantes inuicem.'

<sup>43</sup> *Continuationes*, 7: 'Igitur Grimoaldus filiam Radbodi ducem Frigionum duxit uxorem.'

<sup>44</sup> *Continuationes*, 9.

<sup>45</sup> *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 334-7, 348-9.

<sup>46</sup> *AMP*, s.a. 691: 'Ex hoc ergo tempore iam non de principatu Francorum, sed de diversarum gentium acquisitione, quae quondam Francis subiectae fuerant, invicto principi certamen instabat, id est contra Saxones, Frisiones, Alemannos, Bawarios, Aquitanios, Wascones atque Brittones.'

However, the Frisians are singled out for special attention. In fact the author provides details about two wars between Pippin and Radbod. In the first, dated to 692, Pippin marshals the whole Frankish army and marches against the Frisian duke, ‘who was covered in the fog of such stupidity that he presumed to plan for battle against the unconquered leader Pippin.’<sup>47</sup> The Frisians lost, and Radbod ‘asked for peace and placed himself under Pippin’s authority with those he ruled. And with hostages given he became a tributary of Pippin.’<sup>48</sup> This peace did not last, and in 697 Pippin was again forced to march against Radbod, ‘who had often disregarded the words of the leader Pippin and harassed the borders of his rule with repeated attacks.’<sup>49</sup> In 711 Grimoald marries Radbod’s daughter, who, as in the *Continuations*, is not named.<sup>50</sup> In 715 the Neustrians make an alliance with Radbod, specifically against the Pippinids, which Ragamfred renews the following year before marching against Charles in 717, supported by Radbod and the Frisians.<sup>51</sup> Here we come to a more radical alteration of *LHF*’s narrative: instead of Radbod inflicting a crushing defeat on Charles, the author is ambiguous, and says only great casualties were suffered on both sides.<sup>52</sup>

What should we make of these portrayals of Radbod? Both the later authors made more of the Frisian leader than the *LHF*-author had, despite being further from the events they described, but perhaps this is why they did so. Neither author exaggerated Radbod or his achievements; they simply gave him a greater prominence in their narratives. If we place these passages about Radbod in the wider context of the discourse of otherness we explored in the previous chapter, their reason for doing this becomes clear: Radbod provides a prototype for the relationship between the Carolingians and the peripheral leaders. He is subdued by Pippin in the 690s but then breaks his loyalty to Pippin by allying with the enemies of Pippin’s successor. We saw in the previous chapter the early Carolingian authors generally presented the wars of the eighth century between the Carolingians and their enemies according to this general pattern: the peripheral peoples and their

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<sup>47</sup> AMP, s.a. 692: ‘*qui tantae stulticiae involutus caligine fuit, ut Pippino invicto principi aciem parare presumeret.*’

<sup>48</sup> AMP, s.a. 692: ‘*pacem postulat seque cum his quos regebat suae ditioni subdidit. Obsidibus quoque datis Pippini tributarius.*’

<sup>49</sup> AMP, s.a. 697: ‘*qui verba principis Pippini sepe contempserat et fines principatus eius crebris irruptionibus vexabat.*’

<sup>50</sup> AMP, s.a. 711.

<sup>51</sup> AMP, s.a. 715-7.

<sup>52</sup> AMP, s.a. 717: ‘*magna ex utraque parte clades exstitit. Dirimente nocte cedem hostis uterque suis sese mandavit.*’



leaders supposedly rising in rebellion after having made treaties with or otherwise having been subdued by the Frankish rulers. Radbod was the first of these peripheral rulers with whom the Pippinids had sustained hostile contact, and the interpretation of these hostilities both influenced and was in turn influenced by how the later peripheral wars of the Carolingians were portrayed.

### 3.2.2 Radbod and the Frisian Mission

Turning to the hagiographical sources of the late eighth and early ninth centuries, we find a different side of Radbod's otherness emphasised to that of the more politically focussed texts. The authors of these sources concentrated not on his involvement in Frankish politics, but on his impact on the Frisian mission and his interactions with the missionaries. Here, Radbod's paganism is his main trait, yet with the exception of *Vita Bonifatii*, Radbod is not depicted exclusively as a pagan persecutor. It would be going too far to say the hagiographers were sympathetic to the Frisian ruler, but even when narrating the exploits of Christian saints they could portray a pagan ruler in somewhat human terms. Ultimately, though, they recognised Radbod as an obstacle to the conversion of Frisia, and there is certainly a sense his death was a good thing. It is also worth noting the hagiographers tend to refer to Radbod as *rex*, rather than the title *dux* used by the historians, something we shall return to shortly.

The first source to mention Radbod in the context of the Frisian mission is Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, completed c.731. Bede explains Willibrord's foundation of the Frisian mission in terms which show a clear understanding – both on the part of Bede and his subject – of the political relationship on which such an effort relied. Rather than going straight to Frisia to begin his missionary work, Willibrord went first to Pippin II. This was crucial: 'Because Pippin had recently occupied *Frisia citerior* and driven out King Radbod, he sent Willibrord and his companions there to preach; and he assisted them with his imperial authority so that no troubles would interfere with their preaching'.<sup>53</sup> This sets the scene for the missionary efforts of Willibrord and Boniface, as well as their successors: when Frisia was subdued missionary activity could go forward; when Frankish authority was weakened, so the mission would be too.

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<sup>53</sup> Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, v.10: 'et quia nuper citeriorem Fresiam expulso inde Rathbedo rege ceperat, illo eos ad praedicandum misit; ipse quoque imperiali auctoritate iuuans, ne qui praedicantibus quicquam molestiae inferret.'

The next reference to Radbod, and the most explicitly hostile, is in Willibald's *Vita Bonifatii*. Boniface arrived in Frisia in 716, over twenty years after the successful establishment of Willibrord as archbishop of Utrecht,<sup>54</sup> although there is no mention of the latter at the time of Boniface's arrival.<sup>55</sup> Like Bede, Willibald places the mission in its political context – the conflicts between Frisia and Francia – but the situation in 716 was very different to that of 692. According to Willibald, Radbod's primary concern after Pippin II's death was the expulsion of Christians from Frisia. He explains at the time of Boniface's arrival in Frisia a war had broken out between Charles Martel, 'princeps and glorious dux of the Franks', and King Radbod which saw 'a serious invasion of the pagans'.<sup>56</sup> The area being invaded was presumably that previously subdued by Pippin II, Bede's *Frisia citerior*, the area around Utrecht and Dorestad. But the results – according to Willibald at least – were of great religious significance:

and now the greatest part of the churches of Christ in Frisia, which had previously been subject to the authority of the Franks, were devastated by Radbod's applied persecution and left destitute by the expulsion of the servants of God, and idols to worship were raised with temples grievously restored.<sup>57</sup>

Here we see Radbod at his worst; not just the non-Frankish ally of the Neustrians, but an idol-worshipping, temple-building persecutor of the servants of God. Note Willibald's slight digression to emphasise the Frisian Church had been under Frankish authority, though: Radbod is a threat to Christianity, but also to the stability of the *regnum Francorum*.

Willibald's presentation of Radbod fits quite well in the Carolingian discourse of otherness. In fact, given Willibald was writing in the 760s – that is, contemporaneously with Fredegar's continuator – his was probably one of the earliest contributions to this kind of world-view: it was certainly one of the more extreme, as there is no room in the community for this version of Radbod. Likewise, as we have seen, he accused another of Charles's enemies, Heden of Thuringia, of being a heretic who neglected his people and exposed them to the ravages of the

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<sup>54</sup> On which see Levison, *England and the Continent*, pp. 56-60.

<sup>55</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 4.

<sup>56</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 4: 'Sed quoniam, gravi ingruente paganorum impetu, hostilis exorta dissensio inter Carlum principem gloriosumque ducem Francorum et Redbodum regem Fresonum populos.'

<sup>57</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 4: 'maximaque iam pars ecclesiarum Christi, quae Franchorum prius in Fresia subiectae erant imperio, Redbodi incumbente persecutione ac servorum Dei facta expulsione, vastata erat ac destructa, idulorum quoque cultura extructis dilubrorum fanis lugubriter renovata.'

Saxons,<sup>58</sup> despite Heden's support of Willibrord's monastic foundation at Echternach, and also of the Frisian mission.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, it was Willibald's aim to show Boniface had shared enemies and opponents with the Franks and their mayors, and in this he thoroughly succeeded, as can be seen not just in the popularity of Boniface's cult in the Carolingian world, but also in many modern accounts of Radbod, which present him as a hostile, pagan king and tend to down-play or overlook the pro-Christian connotations of his relations with both Pippin II and the Neustrians Chilperic II and Ragamfred.<sup>60</sup>

Our remaining references to Radbod come from the end of the eighth century and the first half of the ninth, and all have a much more explicitly Frisian focus. The first of these is Alcuin's *Vita Willibrordi*, composed c.796.<sup>61</sup> This text is somewhat lacking in historical details, especially for Willibrord's later years, because Alcuin focussed instead on expounding his own missionary ideology and providing a more theologically-based account of Willibrord's career.<sup>62</sup> Inevitably, though, Radbod has a place in the *Vita*, as the pagan ruler of Frisia during the early years of Willibrord's mission. Unlike Willibald, however, Alcuin does not provide an explicit denunciation of Radbod. He followed the basic thrust of Bede's account about Willibrord; the saint and his companions arrive in Utrecht, but then travel to Francia to visit Pippin II because the Frisians and their King Radbod 'were still soiled by pagan rites'.<sup>63</sup> With Pippin's support, Willibrord began rooting out the 'thorns of idolatry' and spreading the word of God.<sup>64</sup>

When describing Willibrord's attempts to evangelise Frisia, however, Alcuin stresses the saint 'was not afraid to approach King Radbod of Frisia and his pagan people,' even though he was unable to 'to soften Radbod's heart of stone to life.'<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 6.

<sup>59</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 62-3.

<sup>60</sup> Wood, 'Saint-Wandrille', p. 14.

<sup>61</sup> On the date of the text, and the possibility of an earlier, now lost *Vita*, see Wood, *Missionary Life*, p. 79-81, 85-6.

<sup>62</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 81-3.

<sup>63</sup> *Vita Willibrordi*, 5: 'Sed quia eadem gens Fresonum... cum rege suo Rabbodo paganis adhuc ritibus sorduit, visum est viro Dei Franciam contendere ac duces illorum adire Pippinum, virum strenuum, triumphis clarum et moribus probum.'

<sup>64</sup> *Vita Willibrordi*, 5: 'quo potuisset idolatriae spinas extirpare et purissima verbi Dei semina per munda novalia habundantius spargere.'

<sup>65</sup> *Vita Willibrordi*, 9: 'Nam tunc temporis regem Fresonum Rabbodum cum sua gente paganum non timuit adire... Sed praefatus Fresonum rex virum Dei humilitatis gratia benigne suscipiens, nullis tamen vitae fomentis saxeam eius cor emollire potuit.'

Alcuin acknowledged Radbod's refusal to accept Christianity personally, but stopped short of portraying him as an active persecutor of Christianity, and there is nothing in *Vita Willibrordi* about the years immediately after Pippin's death, which proved so troublesome for Boniface. However, the account of how Willibrord came to gain a true foothold in Frisia contains some telling information. After Pippin died:

Charles became master of his father's kingdom. He increased the many peoples of the Franks by the sceptre, among which he also added Frisia to his paternal authority with glorious triumph by defeating Radbod.<sup>66</sup>

After this, Willibrord's status in Frisia was undisputed, to the point we hear no more about his career, with the rest of the *Vita* being dedicated to describing the miracles he performed. Thus, we should see the Radbod of *Vita Willibrordi* as an obstacle to mission, even if he did not actively persecute Christians, but his true significance as an obstacle is only revealed after his defeat and removal, which allowed the conversion of Frisia to proceed unopposed. It would be wrong to suggest Alcuin's portrayal of Radbod is quite as ambiguous as the *LHF*-author's with regard to Radbod's place in the community – as a pagan he has no such place – but an approachable Radbod willing to allow missionaries to work in the area is certainly more ambivalent than what we find in Willibald's text.

As we shall see when we turn to Altfrid's *Vita Liudgeri*, the century after Radbod's death was not entirely smooth for the missionaries. For now, it is worth mentioning the Frisian ruler had a small part in Altfrid's work, where he appears not as an obstacle to mission *per se*, but rather as something of a political tyrant, eager to kill or exile his opponents and seize their lands and estates.<sup>67</sup> It seems sensible to conclude there was no desire from the Christians of Frisia to remember Radbod in a positive light, and Altfrid even borrowed Alcuin's account of Charles Martel's defeat of Radbod, suggesting he shared Alcuin's view life was made much easier for Christians in Frisia after the ruler's death.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Vita Willibrordi*, 13: 'Contigit autem, Pippinum ducem Francorum diem obire et filium eius Carolum regno patris potiri. Qui multas gentes sceptris adiecit Francorum, inter quas etiam triumpho gloria Fresiam, devicto Rabbodo, paterno superaddidit imperio.'

<sup>67</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.1: 'Set quia gens illa eo tempore in errore infidelitatis erat excaecata, multa multi iniusta a rege crudeli et ab eius ministris fuerunt perpassi. Alios enim rex idem insidiando necaverat et haereditates illorum possidebat, alios vero extra terminus effugabat et nihilominus ipsorum sibi haereditates vendicabat.'

<sup>68</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.4.

The longest and most unusual depiction of Radbod comes from *Vita Vulframni*, a text associated with the monastery of St Wandrille, in which the Frisian ruler is nearly as prominent as the subject himself.<sup>69</sup> The *Vita* can be dated to c.797-807, but contains many apparent inconsistencies, and has traditionally been dismissed as an unreliable forgery. Stefan Lebecq has recently redeemed the *Vita* somewhat by showing it was probably compiled from earlier materials, some of which may date from as early as the 740s.<sup>70</sup> The creation of the final text at the turn of the ninth century may have been at least partly a response to *Vita Willibrordi*,<sup>71</sup> although this cannot be the case for the materials on which the compiler relied.<sup>72</sup> Whatever the nature of its composition, though, the text contains a demonstrably fraudulent account of Wulfram's role in the conversion of Frisia. Although Wulfram is known to have been dead by the end of the seventh century, the account of his work in Frisia takes place between 700 and 719,<sup>73</sup> during which time the saint encounters both Radbod and Willibrord, although the latter has only a minor role, and there is no reference to him as the founder of the mission.<sup>74</sup>

Nevertheless, Radbod is rather prominent in the text, so it can contribute to our understanding of the Carolingian perception of the Frisian ruler. At its most basic level, the text differs from other hagiographical accounts in two ways: it fails to place the Frisian mission in the context of the Frankish wars and it refers to Radbod primarily as *dux*, or occasionally *princeps*, and only once as *rex*.<sup>75</sup> He is not depicted as opposing Wulfram's mission in any way; in fact, he allows the saint to preach to anyone who wishes to hear the word of God and even allows the saint to recruit those he is able to miraculously save from being sacrificed to the gods.<sup>76</sup> Yet despite his goodwill, Radbod was unwilling to be converted himself – the author even borrows Alcuin's phrase about Radbod's 'heart of stone.'<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> For a general survey of the monastery and its hagiography, see Wood, 'Saint-Wandrille', pp. 1-14.

<sup>70</sup> S. Lebecq, 'Vulfran, Willibrord et la mission de Frise: pour une relecture de la *Vita Vulframni*', in M. Polfer (ed.), *L'évangélisation des régions entre Meuse et Moselle et la fondation de l'abbaye d'Echternach (Ve-IXe siècle)* (Luxemburg, 2000), pp. 431-51.

<sup>71</sup> Wood, 'Saint-Wandrille', pp. 13-4; Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 92-3.

<sup>72</sup> R. Meens, 'With One Foot in the Font. The Failed Baptism of the Frisian King Radbod and the Eighth Century Discussion About the Fate of Unbaptized Forefathers' (Forthcoming). Note, Meens argues against Wood's assertion the *Vita* is a response to *Vita Willibrordi*, highlighting the generally positive depiction of Willibrord in the text.

<sup>73</sup> *Vita Vulframni*, 4-10.

<sup>74</sup> *Vita Vulframni*, 9.

<sup>75</sup> For Radbod as *rex* see *Vita Vulframni*, 9.

<sup>76</sup> *Vita Vulframni*, 6-8.

<sup>77</sup> *Vita Vulframni*, 8.

But unlike Willibrord, in a story that has permeated many subsequent discussion of early medieval paganism,<sup>78</sup> Wulfram was supposedly able to bring Radbod to the baptismal font before the Frisian ruler changed his mind.<sup>79</sup> The reason for the Radbod's about-face was a conversation held between him and the saint on the edge of the font, in which Radbod asked whether his ancestors would be with him in Heaven, should he choose to convert.<sup>80</sup> Wulfram responded that Radbod's predecessors had received the sentence of damnation, at which point Radbod withdrew from the font, declaring to Wulfram he would rather spend eternity in the company of his ancestors than in the company of a few paupers – the citizens of heaven.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, Radbod had been deceived by the Devil, who appears to him in a fever-dream and promises him a golden hall in which to spend eternity.<sup>82</sup> The Devil even promises to show the hall to him, something Wulfram would be unable to do with the promised heavenly residence. One of Radbod's followers and a deacon are then shown a golden hall by a demonic guide. The guide and the hall turn to dust when the deacon invokes the power of Christ, and when they return they discover Radbod has died unbaptised.

This curious account has been seen by Ian Wood as an attempt by the monastery of St Wandrille to claim some of the glory associated with the Frisian mission, and to show a Neustrian bishop associated with the monastery had been just as important in the conversion of Frisia as Willibrord and Boniface, two saints more readily associated with the Carolingians and Austrasia. Thus the portrayal of Radbod as a ruler willing to tolerate the missionaries may be more in line with the memory of his role as an ally of the Charles Martel's Neustrian enemies Ragamfred and Chilperic II.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, this Radbod ends his life unbaptised and deceived by the Devil, and is thus condemned to hell, so this is hardly a sympathetic portrayal, even if it is more even-handed than Willibald's or even Alcuin's portrayals.

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<sup>78</sup> For example, R. Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe: From Paganism to Christianity, 371-1386AD* (London, 1997), p. 239.

<sup>79</sup> *Vita Vulframni*, 9.

<sup>80</sup> On this incident, see S. Lebecq, 'Le baptême manqué du roi Radbod', in O. Redon and B. Rosenberger (eds), *Les assises du pouvoir: temps médiévaux, territoires africains* (St-Denis, 1994), pp. 141-50.

<sup>81</sup> Meens, 'With One Foot in the Font' places this episode firmly in the context of debates about pagan ancestors taking place in the mid-eighth century, thus supporting the idea this is one of the earlier sections.

<sup>82</sup> *Vita Vulframni*, 10.

<sup>83</sup> Wood, 'Saint-Wandrille', p. 14.

Rather than representing reality or political sentiments, then, we should see Radbod's role in *Vita Vulframni* as largely discursive. As Rob Meens has shown, the story of Radbod's near-baptism needs to be placed in the context of debates about pagan ancestors which took place in the mid-eighth century, primarily in the circle of Boniface.<sup>84</sup> Given what we saw of Carolingian attempts to define paganism emerging from this same circle, such debates and those who were interested in them should not surprise us. If the missionaries were engaging in theological debate with the pagans, as Daniel of Winchester suggested,<sup>85</sup> we can easily imagine contemporary pagans voicing the concerns placed in Radbod's mouth by the author of *Vita Vulframni*. There were even those, like the heretic priest Clemens, who argued ancestral pagans had been saved when Christ descended into Hell.<sup>86</sup> Willibrord may have been one such believer, but in *Vita Vulframni* he is recruited for the side which argued against this line, as Boniface had done during his lifetime.<sup>87</sup> We should not dismiss Wood's suggestion the final composition of the *Vita* was a response to *Vita Willibrordi*, but we can see it was composed of elements which had various discursive purposes, some of which relied on the importance of Willibrord. We shall turn to another of these – what the text has to say about the importance of miracles – shortly, but for now let us turn to a final, unanswered question about Radbod.

### 3.2.3 *Dux* or *rex*? The Issue of Radbod's Title

Now we have reviewed the different ways in which Radbod was portrayed by historians and hagiographers, and examined some of the reasons for these differences, there is one question which remains unanswered: what ruling title did Radbod use? In a sense we can never answer this question, because we have no written sources from Frisia during Radbod's reign. Nevertheless, the titles later authors chose to assign him are indicative of how they saw both Radbod's role in the world, and the relationship between Franks and Frisians as personified by the relationship between Radbod and his contemporary Frankish rulers.

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<sup>84</sup> Meens, 'With One Foot in the Font'.

<sup>85</sup> Boniface, *Epistolae*, 23.

<sup>86</sup> For a recent assessment of Clemens and his beliefs, see S. Meeder, 'Boniface and the Irish heresy of Clemens', *Church History*, 8 (2011), 251-280.

<sup>87</sup> Meens, 'With One Foot in the Font'.

For the historical authors, Radbod was always *dux*, a title representing lower status than *rex*. This made perfect sense for the *LHF*-author, whose world revolved around the authority of the Merovingian kings to whom all other rulers in the Frankish world were subordinate. It would not have made sense for him to portray Radbod as king, even if he claimed such a title. Similarly, the early Carolingian historians presented Radbod as one of those who had opposed the rightful rule of Pippin II and Charles Martel, who exercised Frankish authority on behalf of the kings. Again, a 'King' Radbod would not have made sense when it was necessary to portray him as a rebellious *dux* in order to demonstrate his subordinate position within the Frankish sphere of influence, as well as possibly to provide a contrast with the loyal *duces* Pippin and Charles who were, after all, willing to allow the Merovingians to continue their charade of kingship.

So, if Radbod was supposed to be a rebellious *dux* in the Carolingian mind, why did the hagiographers portray him as *rex*? Pagans were outsiders to the Carolingian perception of community because they did not fulfil the Christian criteria for membership of this community. During Radbod's reign the Frisians were 'still soiled by pagan rites'<sup>88</sup> and 'blinded in the error of faithlessness',<sup>89</sup> whereas the Franks were a fully Christian people who instigated the conversion and correction of other peoples (albeit through Anglo-Saxon missionaries in this particular case). In these texts, then, Radbod's subjection to Frankish rule is only ever implicit, and Frisian subjection is only fully realised after his death; after all, Willibald pointed out the Frisian Church was subject to Frankish authority, not Radbod himself.<sup>90</sup>

For the hagiographers, though, the Frisians of Radbod's time were a separate people from the Franks because of their paganism, and part of this involved having their own king, the *rex Frisionum*, a pagan counterpart to the Christian *rex Francorum*. Moreover, just as authors of historical accounts often held peripheral leaders responsible for the rebellious actions of their peoples, so for hagiographers Radbod was the embodiment of Frisian paganism. This can be seen most explicitly in *Vita Bonifatii*,<sup>91</sup> but also by the central place Radbod has in the sacrificial practices portrayed by *Vitas Willibrordi* and *Vulframni*, which will be examined

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<sup>88</sup> *Vita Willibrordi*, 5.

<sup>89</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.1.

<sup>90</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 4.

<sup>91</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 4.



more fully below.<sup>92</sup> Hence it is the death of the pagan *rex* which truly opens Frisia to both the missionaries and Charles Martel.<sup>93</sup> *Vita Vulframni*, where Radbod is generally referred to as *dux*, is the exception here, but we should perhaps see this usage as being in line with the author's Neustrian perspective, which remembered Radbod as a subordinate ally of Chilperic II and Ragamfred.

We receive a much more nuanced view of Radbod from the hagiographers than we do from the historians, though the former were hardly in agreement with each other. At the two extremes we have Willbald's utterly hostile depiction and *Vita Vulframni*'s far more sympathetic representation, with Alcuin and Altfred perhaps representing a more balanced middle-ground. Combining these accounts with those of the chronicles and annals we can see Radbod was undoubtedly a complex figure – both in his politics and his religion – who had the misfortune of opposing Pippin II and Charles Martel and of practicing paganism at a time of increasing missionary activity. He was the first victim of the Pippinid-Carolingians, and so became a model for how their historians and hagiographers would portray their enemies: as rebellious pagans.

### 3.3 From Peripheral Pagans to Christian Community

Now we have examined the portrayal of Radbod, we can turn to his people, the Frisians themselves. The first thing to note, however, is they almost disappear from the historical sources after Radbod's reign, before re-emerging again in the ninth-century annals. It has therefore been difficult for modern historians to construct a narrative of the Frankish conquest of Frisia. Nevertheless, there are some references to Frisians which shed light on their situation in the eighth century. Fredegar's continuator mentions a particularly important conflict of 734 – the Battle of the Boorne – in which Charles Martel's armies both marched and sailed into Frisia and defeated and killed *dux* Bubo.<sup>94</sup> There is an incredible amount of religious language used in this account, at least compared to the accounts of the wars with Radbod. Bubo is described as a 'pagan *dux* full of deceitful counsel,' and the continuator reports Charles 'crushed their idolatrous temples and burnt them with fire'; there is no activity comparable to this in the rest of the *Continuations*, even in those sections

<sup>92</sup> *Vita Willibrordi*, 11; *Vita Vulframni*, 6-8.

<sup>93</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 5; *Vita Willibrordi*, 13; *Vita Liudgeri*, i.4.

<sup>94</sup> *Continuationes*, 17.

which deal with the baptism of Saxons. Meanwhile the Frisians themselves are described as ‘the most terrible seafaring people’ who rebel ‘exceedingly savagely.’<sup>95</sup> What we should also note in addition to the language of religion and rebellion used here is Charles engages in both land and sea battles with the Frisians – the ‘seafaring people.’ This association between the Frisians and the sea is completely absent from the descriptions of the wars against Radbod, and is the only indication the Frisians of 734 are a different group to those who had been subjugated after Radbod’s death.

The Frisians fought against in 734 were not those of Bede’s *Frisia citerior*, but those of *Frisia ulterior* (the Frisia beyond the Rhine). Nevertheless, in Frankish sources they are simply ‘Frisians’ or the people of Frisia, with no distinction made. As we saw with the Saxons, this was probably not a lack of knowledge on the part of the authors, but a purposeful portrayal of these people as a single, coherent political unit, the implication of which was they had been subjugated after Radbod’s death, and so any further wars were a result of rebellious or disloyal activity. We can assume this battle led to at least some level of conquest, because the next time we hear of the Frisians, in 748, they marched to war as allies of Pippin III (along with the Wends) against a Saxon rebellion.<sup>96</sup> Interestingly, the continuator refers to the leaders of both peoples as *reges*, a distinct shift from the specifically sub-regal leadership of Radbod and Bubo. We have already seen pagan peoples could be allies of the Franks even if they would not be considered part of the community, but this reference to *reges* may have been an attempt to present the Frisians and Slavs clearly as allies from outside the community without mentioning their paganism.

The *ARF*-author’s account begins in 741, and so does not contain details about Charles Martel’s wars against the Frisians, although it does not mention the Frisian involvement in Pippin’s campaign against the rebellious Saxons of 748 either.<sup>97</sup> It does, however, provide information about the Frisians at the end of the eighth century. The first mention is brief, but shows the Franks had not had everything their own way in Frisia, since a group of Frisians joined a Saxon rebellion in 784;<sup>98</sup> according to Alfrid, this was at the instigation of Widukind,<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> *Continuationes*, 17: ‘gentem dirissimam maritimam Frigionum nimis crudeliter rebellantem... Bubonem gentilem ducem illorum fraudolentum consiliarum interfecit, exercitum Frigionum prostravit fana eorum idolatria contiuit atque conbussit igne.’

<sup>96</sup> *Continuationes*, 31.

<sup>97</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 748.

<sup>98</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 784.

<sup>99</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.21.

who seems to have enjoyed a great deal of influence in Frisia as well as Saxony.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, five years later in 789 both Saxons and Frisians marched with Charlemagne and the Franks against the Wilzi.<sup>101</sup> Likewise, in 791 Charlemagne took council with an assembly of Franks, Saxons and Frisians before campaigning against the Avars.<sup>102</sup> These explicit references to the Frisians, Saxons and Wends as allies of the Franks suggest these peoples were not considered fully part of the Carolingian community, probably because they were still pagans at this time.

All this tells us little about Frisia and the Frisians in the second half of the eighth century, but it does provide the political framework for the production of the hagiographical texts of the period. Although the Frisians are less central to the narrative of Frankish conquests than the Saxons and other peoples, we still get the impression they had not been fully integrated into the community of the *regnum Francorum* by the final quarter of the eighth century. This interpretation is supported by the hagiography, which provides a much more elaborate picture of *Frisia ulterior* in the eighth century. This Frisia, dominated by *terpen* and tides, remained culturally separate from the area to the south and west of the Rhine, and, despite the wars of Charles Martel and the missionary efforts of Willibrord and Boniface, paganism remained an important part of Frisian life until at least the beginning of the ninth century. Thus, despite the claims of the historians about the ‘conquest’ of Frisia, the Frisians remained a separate people, and the target of some vehement hostility from the hagiographers. This was particularly the case with Willibald, who as we have seen, was not well-inclined towards Boniface’s opponents. Likewise, the author of the Frisian *Life of Boniface* – the so-called *Vita altera Bonifatii* – also took a dim view of the Frisians, despite his being a member of the community of St Martin’s in Utrecht.

Yet, as with Radbod, some authors gave a more rounded picture of the Frisians. This is not to say their depictions of paganism were sympathetic, but even in writing about the glory of the missionaries there could be scope for discussion of pagan beliefs. We find this in *Vita Vulframni* and Altfred’s *Vita Liudgeri*. The discourse found in these hagiographical texts certainly sat alongside the Carolingian attempts to define paganism we examined in the previous chapter, but the

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<sup>100</sup> On the links between Frisia and Saxony in the late eighth century, see Rembold ‘Carolingian Saxony’, pp. 39-41.

<sup>101</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 789.

<sup>102</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 791.

hagiographical discourse was not one about the nature of paganism, it was about the mission, and specifically the nature of missionary work and conversion, as well as the role saints and secular leaders played in the conversion process. To this end, each of our hagiographical sources portrays its missionary saint in a different way, not just in terms of his deeds among the pagans, but also the importance of the Carolingian support for furthering his progress.

### 3.3.1 Debating the nature of mission: Willibrord and Alcuin

From the establishment of the Frisian mission and Church by Willibrord in the last decade of the seventh century, mission and the missionaries became increasingly important in Frankish religious and political culture. This is not surprising, despite the fact the missionaries for the most part were not themselves Franks. They were, however, concerned with pushing forward the borders of Christendom, while at the same time the Carolingians were concerned with exerting Frankish rule over peripheral peoples. The activities and interests of these groups overlapped most closely in Frisia and Saxony, areas which in the eighth century were both pagan and outside the Frankish realm. We have relatively little source material written contemporaneously with the first generation of missionaries; the collection of Boniface's letters being the most substantial, although we also possess some charters relating to Willibrord's foundations Echternach, as well as a calendar associated with Willibrord.<sup>103</sup> While we have some hints, then, it is not always easy to determine exactly how the first missionaries saw their role on the continent. Nevertheless, in the second half of the eighth century – that is after the deaths of Willibrord and Boniface – a debate emerged about the nature of missionary activity, and depictions of the Frisians formed a central part of this. The debate itself seems to have concerned three tools through which missionaries could convert pagans: preaching; miracles and martyrdom; and violence.

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<sup>103</sup> For the charters, see C. Wampach, (ed.), *Geschichte der Grundherrschaft Echternach im Frühmittelalter*, I, 2 *Quellenband* (Luxembourg, 1930). For the calendar, see H.A. Wilson, *The Calendar of St Willibrord, From MS Paris Lat. 10837: Facsimile with Transcription, Introduction, and Notes* (London, 1918). For general discussion of Echternach, its charters and scriptorium, see D.O. Croinin, 'Rath Melsigi, Willibrord, and the Earliest Echternach Manuscripts', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), 17-42; N. Netzer, 'Willibrord's Scriptorium at Echternach and Its Relationship to Ireland and Lindisfarne', in G. Bonner, D.W. Rollason, and C. Stancliffe (eds), *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD 1200* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 203-12; N. Netzer, *Cultural Interplay in the Eighth Century: The Trier Gospels and the Making of a Scriptorium at Echternach* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 4-11.

The Frisians play a simple and almost predictable role in Willibald's *Vita Bonifatii*: they are the murderers of the saint. At the end of his life, Boniface returned to Frisia for one last missionary thrust into *Frisia ulterior*. Although Willibald does not specify where in Frisia Boniface based himself at this time – it is only from the later *Vita altera* we learn the place of his martyrdom was Dokkum – it is clearly the more distant part of the region where the pagan people 'are divided by waters lying between the communities of their lands,' a clear reference to the Frisian *terpen*.<sup>104</sup> Willibald even comes close to providing a list of the different groups that inhabited the region, and providing a more nuanced view than simply seeing them all as 'Frisians', but notes such a digression would prove tedious.

Boniface took up where he had left off in 721, vehemently preaching the word of God, driving back the 'pagan rites' and 'erroneous custom of paganism' and rebuilding broken churches.<sup>105</sup> There was, however, a pagan element in the region which was unhappy with the missionary presence, and on a day set aside for the confirmation of new converts Boniface and his companions were ambushed by armed pagans and murdered:

However, after the sun rose and illuminated the aforesaid day... things turned around, enemies came instead of friends, and new executioners instead of new worshippers of the faith, and a vast multitude of enemies rushed into the camp brandishing weapons... And when Boniface was inspiring his disciples towards the crown of martyrdom... the uproar of the pagans, suddenly raging, rushed over them, armed with swords and all the equipment of war, and stained their bodies with the blood from the blessed massacre of the saints.<sup>106</sup>

This is not the end of the matter though, for Willibald also reveals how the pagans plundered Boniface's camp for treasure, which they then argued and fought over, killing many of their own before agreeing how it should be divided up. They were disappointed when they discovered the cases they had recovered contained books instead of gold and silver, but they also found a cache of wine, which they

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<sup>104</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 8: 'gentemque paganam Fresonum... interiacentibus aquis in multos agrorum dividitur pagos.'

<sup>105</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 8: 'Per omnem igitur Fresiam pergens, verbum Domini, paganico repulso ritu et erraneo gentilitatis more destructo, instanter praedicabat ecclesiasque, numine confracto dilubrorum, ingenti studio fabricavit.'

<sup>106</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 8: 'Cum autem praedictus dies... orto iam sole, prorumperet, tunc etiam versa vice pro amicis inimici et novi denique lictores pro noviciis fidei cultoribus advenerant, hostiumque ingens in castra, bibrantibus armis... Cumque... discipulos ad coronam martyrii affabiliter incitabat, confestim furens super eos paganorum tumultus cum gladiis cunctaque militia armatura inruit et felici sanctorum cede corpora cruentavit.'

drank, ‘satisfying their gluttonous stomachs and intoxicating them with wine.’<sup>107</sup> Three days later the pagans were attacked by vengeful Christians, and those remaining in the region who survived the slaughter were converted to Christianity because they were ‘broken by recent misfortunes.’ Willibald makes it clear the slaughter of the pagans was the will of God, who ‘wished to punish them, and be avenged... on the enemies for the shedding of holy blood, and to display publicly his long held-back wrath for the worshippers of idolatry.’<sup>108</sup>

Since this kind of hostility is not reserved specifically for the Frisians, we can see it was not necessarily their paganism which made them the target of such invective. The supposed pagans of Hesse were passive recipients of Boniface’s teaching.<sup>109</sup> They are not portrayed in a positive light by any means, but there is none of the aggression Willibald reserved for the Frisians. Those who refused to convert after Boniface’s preaching are mentioned as continuing ‘all the profanities of paganism,’ but even they are finally convinced by the saint’s miraculous cutting down of the Oak of Jupiter at Geismar. Willibald, then, was not hostile to the Frisians because of their paganism as such: it was their aggressive resistance to Christian and Carolingian expansion which earned them such a denunciation.

What we can see from this selection of depictions, though, is for Willibald there were three important tools in the conversion of pagans and correction of heretics. The first was preaching; Boniface became a teacher during his early career as a monk,<sup>110</sup> and remained one for the rest of his life, with his work on the continent being focussed primarily on a combination of preaching and education. The second is the inspiration provided by a miraculous event, in our examples either the cutting down of a sacred tree or the martyrdom. These, however, were not always entirely successful, and so the third tool required for conversion was violence, either carried out through a ruler or by the common people inspired by God’s will.

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<sup>107</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 8: ‘Ac repente, conperto adamato liquoris hausto, coepit gylosam ventris satiare ingluviem et vino madidum inebriare stomachum.’

<sup>108</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 8: ‘quia omnipotens mundi conditor ac reformator ulcisci se voluit de inimicis et fusam pro sanctorum sanguinem consuetae misericordiae zelo puniri ac diu protelatam idulorum cultoribus iram.’

<sup>109</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 6.

<sup>110</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 3.

This vision of missionary work is in stark contrast to the opinion later voiced by Alcuin. As Ian Wood has demonstrated, *Vita Willibrordi* downplays the importance of miracles, almost completely ignores the role of martyrdom, and specifically denounces the use of violence in the conversion process in favour of showing preaching and education as the most important tools available to a missionary.<sup>111</sup> While miracles are an important part of the *Vita*, with miracle stories forming the second half of the text, they were seen as a supporting factor in the missionary's work, rather than something on which he should rely.<sup>112</sup> Thus, the closest Willibrord comes to a 'set-piece' encounter with paganism comparable to Boniface's felling of the Oak of Jupiter is his venture to the island of Fositeland (modern Helgoland), where he explicitly violates a sacred shrine by baptising three people in its fountain and then slaughtering some of the island's cattle for food.<sup>113</sup> Here there is none of the miraculous element associated with Boniface's action at Geismar; Willibrord simply performs a baptism and kills some cows in order to show the pagans the error of their ways.

Meanwhile, Alcuin's dim view of martyrdom can be seen in two places. When Willibrord is preaching on the island of Fositeland one of his companions is killed by the pagans; Alcuin admits this man 'won the martyr's crown,' but does not name him, or imply his death led to any conversions.<sup>114</sup> Later, Alcuin says Willibrord 'was honoured by the greater glory of preaching, than if he had been crowned by martyrdom alone.'<sup>115</sup> Finally, with regard to Christians carrying out violent acts, Alcuin relates the story of how Willibrord destroyed an idol, the guardian of which then attempted to kill Willibrord. Due to God's protection of the saint the attempt was unsuccessful, but Willibrord prevented his companions from killing the guardian in turn. The man was then possessed by the Devil 'and three days later ended his wretched life in misery.' The clear message was only God could do violence to his enemies.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 82-8.

<sup>112</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 84-5; for the miracles, see *Vita Willibrordi*, 14-30.

<sup>113</sup> *Vita Willibrordi*, 10. For the identification of Fositeland as Helgoland, see Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, ed. W. Trillmich and R. Buchner, *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches* (Darmstadt, 1961), iii.4.

<sup>114</sup> *Vita Willibrordi*, 11.

<sup>115</sup> *Vita Willibrordi*, 32: 'quatenus majori praedicationis gloria honoraretur, quam si solus martyrio coronaretur.'

<sup>116</sup> *Vita Willibrordi*, 14; see Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 84-5.

For both Willibald and Alcuin, then, the Frisian context of their subjects' missionary work could provide a framework for discussion of the exact nature of this work, and the nature of missionary activity generally. Yet each author was also informed by the context in which he was writing, and his aims in composing his text. Willibald's aim was not to provide a model for future missionaries, but rather to show the multi-faceted nature of Boniface's life and career.<sup>117</sup> While he appears to have targeted his text at a general Christian audience, and presented Boniface as monk, missionary, reformer and pastoral leader in Wessex, Francia and Germania, his primary motive appears to have been to show the saint had common interests with a primarily Frankish audience. Hence, Boniface is shown as opposed by the enemies of the Carolingians and works to reform the Frankish Church.<sup>118</sup>

Although the Frisians are only one element in this, they are nevertheless an important one, being both a religious and a political enemy of the Franks, at least in Willibald's portrayal. Thus the author makes an explicit link between the success of the mission and the strengthening of Charles Martel's authority over the Frisians.<sup>119</sup> Likewise, Radbod's title, *rex Frisionum*, may be used to implicitly link him and his followers politically with the Frisians who later murder Boniface. The link between Boniface and the Carolingians is crucial though, and explains why Willibald was happy to show preaching, miracles and anti-pagan violence were all equal tools in the missionary's work. While the missionary himself focussed on inspiring pagans with sermons and miracles, his political allies could support him where necessary with their military might.

Alcuin, however, writing at the end of the eighth century, had seen the conclusion to which this partnership had been taken by Charlemagne in his Saxon Wars, and it was a conclusion which led him to emphasise preaching as the most important aspect of missionary work. The wars were as much about religious conversion as political conquest, since the two went hand-in-hand in Carolingian political thought. This became ever more the case as the wars dragged on and the Franks failed to bring the entirety of the Saxon people to heel. The assumption religious conformity would lead to political loyalty can be seen most clearly in the *Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae*, one clause of which required all Saxons to be

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<sup>117</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 62-4.

<sup>118</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 6-8.

<sup>119</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 5.



baptised on pain of death.<sup>120</sup> The ideology behind this clause is supported by the depiction of the wars found in the annals, which frequently mention baptism as a result of successful campaigns.<sup>121</sup>

Yet Alcuin felt only those who had an understanding of Christianity should be baptised, and so some form of education was necessary before baptism. The best people to deliver this education, in his view, were the missionaries, and so he deployed the missionary bishop exemplar Willibrord as a demonstration of this.<sup>122</sup> The logical extension of this view was not simply that missionaries were the most appropriate teachers of Christianity, but other sources of inspiration for conversion such as miracles, martyrdom and particularly violence, were inferior, since they did not provide the potential convert with an understanding of the faith. As a result they have no place in *Vita Willibrordi*, with the exception of miracles, which are shown as strengthening the faith of those already converted and displaying the holiness of the saint; Alcuin stated in both *Vita Willibrordi* and *Vita Richarii*, although preaching was more important than miracles, the latter should still be made known for posterity.<sup>123</sup> Alcuin's stance against martyrdom seems to have had a particular resonance not just in Frisia, but also at Echternach and in Eastern Saxony; in none of these places was anything made of the martyrdom of Boniface's companions, or the murdered companions of Willibrord or Willehad.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, even Alcuin could not completely deny political conquest and religious conversion went hand-in-hand, as he admitted when he linked Radbod's death and Charles Martel's conquest of Frisia with the strengthening of Willibrord's position as preacher.<sup>125</sup> Charles's conquest had won the political loyalty of the people, but it was up to Willibrord to bring them to Christianity: 'he attempted to purify with sacred baptism the people recently acquired by the sword.'<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> *Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae*, 8.

<sup>121</sup> See, for example, *ARF*, s.a. 777, 780, 785.

<sup>122</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>123</sup> *Vita Willibrordi*, 14; Alcuin, *Vita Richarii*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* 4 (Hanover, 1902), 9; see Wood, *Missionary Life*, p. 82.

<sup>124</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 105-6.

<sup>125</sup> *Vita Willibrordi*, 13; see Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 85-6.

<sup>126</sup> *Vita Willibrordi*, 13: 'nuper gladio adquisitam gentem sacro baptismate abluere conatus est.'

### 3.3.2 Imagining the Frisian community: Liudger and Altfred

So far we have looked at representations of Frisians by those who were not themselves Frisian. Yet from the beginning of the ninth century the Frisians gained their own voice in the missionary discourse, and the first half of the century saw the production of two hagiographical texts which wrote the Frisian mission from a Frisian perspective: Liudger's *Vita Gregorii abbatis Traiectensis* and Altfred's *Vita Liudgeri*. Liudger's and Altfred's texts represent the ways in which hagiography and the Frisian mission could be used as tools for reconciliation. Unlike Alcuin, they each found room for both Boniface and Willibrord in their texts. They also presented the mission in such a way as to emphasise the common links and interests between Frisia and the wider Frankish world, and in Liudger we have an author who attempted to reconcile the divergent Bonifatian traditions which had emerged after the saint's death. Each author was creating a vision of the Frisian community that had emerged from over a century of missionary efforts. But each created his vision by utilising notions present in Carolingian approaches to community in order to show, while a Frisian community existed in its own right, it was part of the wider Carolingian, Christian community.

Since Liudger is the author of one of these texts and the subject of the other, it is worth giving him some individual consideration before turning to the texts themselves. Liudger was a Frisian, and could trace his ancestry back to the beginnings of the Christianisation of Frisia; his paternal grandfather had been an ally of Pippin II's son Grimoald and an opponent of Radbod, and both sides of his family had strong ties to Willibrord.<sup>127</sup> But Liudger was a crucial figure in Frisian Christianity in his own right as an active member of the missionary-pastoral community which emerged under Gregory of Utrecht in the third quarter of the eighth century. He also spent time learning from Alcuin in York, thus adding to the links between Frisia and Northumbria. Finally, he was integral to Charlemagne's expansion into Saxony, being the founder of the monastery of Werden and first bishop of Münster, and so was part of the wider Frankish Christian world.<sup>128</sup> In fact, this wider world emerges much more clearly from *Vita Gregorii* than does the world of late-eighth century Frisia, although we gain the interesting insight that during the

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<sup>127</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.1-7.

<sup>128</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.21-2.

reign of King Pippin III the boundary between Christian and pagan Frisia was the River Lauwers.<sup>129</sup>

Liudger's *Vita Gregorii* actually commemorates both Gregory of Utrecht and Boniface, and provides a joint life of the two saints, emphasising the strong bond between them, their inseparable partnership, and their common goals: in this sense it is comparable to Eigil of Fulda's *Vita Sturmii*, in which Boniface features as Sturm's mentor, ally and co-founder of the monastery of Fulda.<sup>130</sup> Liudger presents Gregory, perhaps predictably, as Boniface's closest companion and disciple after the latter recruit's the young Gregory from the abbey of Pfazel, near Trier, where his grandmother, Adela, was abbess:<sup>131</sup> whether or not Boniface and Gregory were truly as close as Liudger claims is impossible to say.<sup>132</sup> We learn little of Gregory's early career, although he worked with Boniface in Hesse and Thuringia and apparently accompanied his master to Rome on at least one occasion.<sup>133</sup> He was later established by Boniface as leader of the Frisian Church based at Utrecht: Liudger positions him as a successor of Willibrord and Boniface, but stops short of calling him bishop, a position he never obtained.<sup>134</sup> While Gregory was clearly important in furthering the mission – something we learn more about from *Vita Liudgeri* than from *Vita Gregorii* – Liudger's emphasis for the final phase of Gregory's career is more on his role as a leader in Utrecht, where he gains a position of some authority, bolstered above all by his abilities as a preacher.<sup>135</sup> Perhaps more importantly, at least for Liudger, was Gregory's contribution to the culture of learning and education at Utrecht: he apparently built up a significant library, which he divided amongst his disciples on his death.<sup>136</sup>

In *Vita Gregorii*, Liudger places a heavy emphasis on the importance of preaching, undertaken first by Boniface alone in Frisia, and then by Boniface and

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<sup>129</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 5.

<sup>130</sup> Eigil, *Vita Sturmii*, 4-14. On the text see Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 69-72.

<sup>131</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 2.

<sup>132</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, p. 107.

<sup>133</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 8.

<sup>134</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 10. While there is an implication Gregory also succeeded to the bishopric, Liudger never explicitly says this. Alfrid specifically calls Gregory abbot, whereas his successor Alberic receives the episcopal position while in Cologne; *Vita Liudgeri*, i.9-15.

<sup>135</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 9, 12.

<sup>136</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 13-15.

Gregory together in Thuringia and Hesse.<sup>137</sup> Liudger actually begins his account with Boniface in Frisia, and gives him a thirteen year period of preaching in the region; much longer than the three years claimed by Willibald.<sup>138</sup> This may simply be an error on Liudger's part, although it is an incredibly specific one, since he lists the places Boniface preached in, and how long he spent at each one.<sup>139</sup> On the other hand, the saint may not have been tied to one region at a time, as has previously been assumed, and as he is presented in *Vita Bonifatii*. In either case, Liudger's version should be seen as representing a Frisian tradition that made Boniface a 'Frisian' saint. Preaching was not the only important role Liudger saw his saints as fulfilling: pastoral care was also crucial. While in Hesse and Thuringia, Boniface and Gregory worked towards the conversion of the inhabitants, but also guided and led them, and helped to defend them from pagan threats.<sup>140</sup> Likewise, while Liudger says Gregory inherited the position of preacher to the Frisians from Boniface, the second half of his work contains very little preaching, and instead focusses much more heavily on Gregory's pastoral duties.<sup>141</sup>

Liudger would have inherited a respect for Boniface from Gregory and a respect for Willibrord from both family connections and from his mentor Alcuin; he thus found room for both saints in his text. Boniface features as the spiritual guide and mentor of Gregory, and is referred to as 'God's chosen martyr' or 'the future martyr',<sup>142</sup> but there is no narrative of his actual martyrdom, indicating while Liudger was happy to celebrate Boniface's martyrdom, he perhaps shared Alcuin's uncertainty about it. Willibrord, meanwhile, does not feature in the narrative itself, but he is mentioned as the founder of the Frisian mission and the bishopric of Utrecht, the latter of which Liudger erroneously has Boniface succeeding to.<sup>143</sup> He thus appears at a crucial moment, providing the link between the origin of the Frisian Church and the more recent Christians who had worked in the area but perhaps owed their legacy more directly to Boniface. With Gregory being the 'pious heir' of both Boniface and Willibrord as preacher to the Frisians, and with his

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<sup>137</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 2-3.

<sup>138</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 1. Compare *Vita Bonifatii*, 5.

<sup>139</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, p. 100-2. Liudger also has Boniface travel to Rome to be consecrated and renamed by Gregory III after he has been made archbishop of Mainz, which is clearly wrong; *Vita Gregorii*, 8.

<sup>140</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 2.

<sup>141</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 9-15.

<sup>142</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 2-4.

<sup>143</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 10.

pastoral care over the region, it is clear, like his predecessors, he had become Frisian by association.

*Vita Gregorii* also contains a list of Boniface's other disciples and the roles they took on after their master's death. We learn of Bishops Lull of Mainz, Megingoz of Würzburg and Willibald of Eichstätt, and Abbots Wynnebald of Heidenheim and Sturm of Fulda. Each of these men is given a crucial role in continuing Boniface's work and maintaining his legacy, and Liudger also includes the interesting aside that Wynnebald was 'greatly beloved of my master Gregory'.<sup>144</sup> Liudger later reflects this by discussing Gregory's own disciples, who are not named, but are said to have been drawn from the Franks, Angles, Frisians, Saxons, Bavarians and Suevi. Crucially, many of these disciples went on to become bishops or priests.<sup>145</sup> The point of mentioning these disciples – both of Boniface and Gregory – seems to have been two-fold. First it emphasised Utrecht's connection with the other Bonifatian centres, particularly Mainz and Fulda, at a time when all three were developing their own interpretations of the saint's legacy. It may also have been an attempt to stress the unity of these places through their association with a common patron. This would be in stark contrast to Eigil's approach, which highlighted the rivalry between Lull and Sturm after Boniface's death.<sup>146</sup> Second, it showed the influence Frisia had continued to exert on the rest of the Frankish world through Gregory, not just because it was the place of Boniface's martyrdom, but because bishops and priests of the Carolingian realm were being trained there.

As well as calling on this shared legacy, Liudger also described the close relationship of Boniface and Gregory with the secular powers. This was an important part of the Bonifatian tradition as preserved in Mainz and Fulda, with both Willibald and Eigil stressing the ties between Boniface and the Frankish mayors.<sup>147</sup> In Liudger's account Boniface's missionary activities are brought to the attention of 'King' Charles – that is Charles Martel – who honours the saint appropriately. Boniface is later granted the see of Mainz by Charles's sons.<sup>148</sup> Likewise, Gregory

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<sup>144</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 5-6.

<sup>145</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 11: '*Quidam enim eorum erant de nobili stirpe Francorum, quidam autem de religiosa gente Anglorum, quidam vero et de novella Dei plantatione diebus nostris inchoate Fresonum et Saxonum, quidam autem et de Baguariis et Suevis praeditis eadem religion... Quibus omnibus undecumque quasi ad unum ovile ovibus collectis pius pater et pastor Gregorius.*'

<sup>146</sup> Eigil, *Vita Sturmi*, 16-20.

<sup>147</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 7-8; Eigil, *Vita Sturmi*, 12.

<sup>148</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 3-4.

receives his authority over Utrecht from King Pippin.<sup>149</sup> Here, then, the Frisian saints have their authority explicitly linked to the Carolingians, making the rulers a vital part of the creation of the Frisian community, and more importantly making Frisia part of the Frankish realm, from which it had long been excluded due to its paganism.

We should thus read a two-fold aim in Liudger's text. He was laying down an account of those who performed the duties which were most important to the growing Christian community of Frisia, preaching and pastoral care, duties he was familiar with from having acted as an aide to Gregory as well as a being a missionary in his own right. But he was also aiming at reconciliation. This reconciliation was aimed first and foremost at the various traditions which had begun to emerge among Boniface's disciples as to how best to remember their master, and what the true nature of his legacy was. By including all of the martyr's most prominent heirs, and showing they all played an important part in continuing their master's work, Liudger was probably attempting to bring some kind of unity to the commemoration of the saint. In this sense the lack of martyrdom narrative may be central. Liudger had probably read Willibald's *Vita Bonifatii* – even if his chronology for Boniface's first mission in Frisia is different to Willibald's – and he must have known of the disagreements between Utrecht, Mainz and Fulda over Boniface's remains.<sup>150</sup> As such he may have been wary of debating such a highly charged topic. His attempt at reconciliation had another target; the commemorations of Boniface and Willibrord, which perhaps had begun to diverge after the composition of their *Vitas*. The significance of these aspects of *Vita Gregorii*, though, is they clearly showed Frisia was part of the community. It had gained this place through the efforts of Willibrord and Boniface, and through Gregory and his disciples it had even gained a central place in the religious life of the Empire.

Altfrid's *Vita Liudgeri* supports the hints we get from *Vita Gregorii* about the state of Frisian Christianity in the second half of the eighth century. Like Liudger, who was his uncle, Altfrid was a Frisian, and also involved with the Saxon mission and the monastery of Werden, of which he was the fifth abbot (839-48). He composed

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<sup>149</sup> *Vita Gregorii*, 10.

<sup>150</sup> *Vita Bonifatii*, 8; Eigil, *Vita Sturmii*, 15-20.

the *Vita* while abbot of Werden,<sup>151</sup> though he focussed far more on Frisia than Saxony, and provides a great amount of detail not just about Liudger and his colleagues, but also about the world in which they lived.

Liudger's missionary work follows a similar pattern to that found in *Vita Gregorii*, with a community of missionaries leading the local population in religious education and the building of churches, as Boniface and Gregory had done east of the Rhine. Liudger, however, is not the only missionary to be named in the *Life*, nor is he the only one to have the spotlight. The community is first led by Abbot Gregory and then by his successor Bishop Alberic. Under Gregory we hear of several members of the missionary community, the most prominent of whom was the Anglo-Saxon Liafwin (or Lebuin), who, after his arrival in Utrecht, was sent by Gregory to work in the area around the IJssel valley, where he built a church at Deventer – in the blurred border area between Frisia and Saxony – which was twice burned down by Saxons before being rebuilt by Liudger.<sup>152</sup> Likewise, some of Liudger's own disciples are mentioned, for example Hildegrim and Gerbert, whom the saint took with him to Monte Cassino,<sup>153</sup> and Bernlef, a blind man cured by Liudger, who aided him in the baptism of new-born children.<sup>154</sup>

Liudger's missionary work is also presented in a more active way than Boniface and Gregory's had been in *Vita Gregorii*. Not only did he preach; he also travelled round Frisia destroying 'the temples of the gods and the various places of idol worship among the people'.<sup>155</sup> Likewise, he apparently travelled to the island of Fositeland, as Willibrord had done. After destroying the temples dedicated to the god Fosite, Liudger had a church built and was able to convert and baptise the inhabitants.<sup>156</sup> Whether this actually happened, or whether Altfred simply borrowed the idea from Alcuin's *Vita Willibrordi* is uncertain, although Altfred himself made the comparison to Willibrord.<sup>157</sup> Nevertheless, whether it was Liudger who followed Willibrord or Altfred who followed Alcuin, this episode highlights the continuation

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<sup>151</sup> On Altfred's presentation of Liudger's divinely-inspired spiritual authority as a tool for retaining Werden's Frisian landholdings, see Rembold, 'Carolingian Saxony', pp. 258-61.

<sup>152</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.13-5; on Liafwin and hagiographical texts written about him, see Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 115-7.

<sup>153</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.21.

<sup>154</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.25-6.

<sup>155</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.16: 'misit Albricus Liudgerum et cum eo alios servos Dei, ut distruerunt fana deorum et varias culturas idolorum in gente Fresonum.'

<sup>156</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.22.

<sup>157</sup> For the relevant passage in Alcuin's text, see *Vita Willibrordi*, 10; see also Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 110-1.

of the message of the *Vita Gregorii*: Frisia and the Frisians were a crucial part of the Frankish realm, especially in the missionary field.

There are other links between Frisia and the wider world in the text, including the vital relationship with the Carolingians. Liudger's secular patron was Charlemagne, who is shown as continuing his family's interest in matters across the Rhine. First he places Liudger in charge of five *pagi* east of the River Lauwers: Mugmerth, Hunusgau, Fivilgau, Emisgau and Federitgau, along with the island of Bant.<sup>158</sup> Later, Liudger is assigned to be teacher of the newly converted Saxons by Charlemagne, and establishes the bishopric of Münster.<sup>159</sup> However, the link between Liudger's family and Charlemagne's went back to the period before the conversion of Frisia. Liudger's paternal grandfather, Wrssing, was an opponent of Radbod, and when he was exiled he went to the court of Pippin II's son Grimoald II, under whose tutelage and influence he accepted Christianity and baptism.<sup>160</sup> Such an introduction to Liudger's ancestors – and thus his own – allowed Alfrid not only to highlight the links between the saint's family and the Carolingians, but also to point out Wrssing had been an opponent of the great pagan ruler who had been a thorn in the side of Pippin and Charles Martel: in these clashes, Liudger's family had been on the side of the Pippinids.

The dichotomy between Christianity and paganism was crucial to Alfrid's representation of Frisia, and in Liudger's time it was a dichotomy that still existed. Alfrid's depiction of paganism is complex, though. He portrays it as the military threat it had been to Boniface and Gregory in Germania. The Frisians who still cling to their traditional religion appear determined to plunge the region back into the darkness of error. Two of these, the East Frisian leaders Hunno and Eilrad, began a 'night of great faithlessness,' when 'churches were burned and the servants of God driven out.'<sup>161</sup> But it was not only the pagans of Frisia who threatened the Christian community; the actions of the neighbouring Saxons were also important. The infamous Saxon leader Widukind, called the 'root of all wickedness', is named as an instigator of anti-Christian violence in Frisia, which not only led to the expulsion of the missionaries, but also saw many Frisians 'abandon the faith of Christ and

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<sup>158</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.22.

<sup>159</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.23-4.

<sup>160</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.1-2.

<sup>161</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.22: 'nox infidelitatis magna... combustae sunt ecclesiae servique Dei repulse.'



sacrifice to idols, in the manner of their former error.’<sup>162</sup> This further emphasised Frisia’s place in the community of the *regnum Francorum*, since Widukind was an arch-enemy of the Carolingians, at least according to the annals. Thus, Altfred does not attempt to deny the paganism of the Frisians, even as recently as the last quarter of the eighth century. But by presenting the Frisian pagans as a threat to Christianity and as allies of the outsider Widukind, he places them firmly within the discourse of otherness, which allowed just enough ambiguity to distinguish between Christian Frisians, who were members of the community, and pagan Frisians, who were not.

Yet Altfred also provides us with a glimpse of what Frisian paganism was actually like, and here we return to Liudger’s ancestors. The saint’s maternal great-grandmother had been a stalwart pagan, who had tried to drown her granddaughter for want of a grandson.<sup>163</sup> Altfred makes it clear this was completely acceptable to the pagans until a neighbour intervened and fed the baby honey, at which point the matriarch’s hired assassins refused to carry out their orders. The belief was it was okay to murder a child who had not eaten ‘earthly food’.<sup>164</sup> Altfred thus recognised paganism was part of his family history, and attempted to find a place for this in his work. We shall return to exactly what place he found for it shortly.

Through the *Lives* of Gregory and Liudger we can see the emergence of the idea of Christian community in Frisia in the eighth century. Liudger and Altfred, each in his own way, was harnessing this community, giving it a sense of internal unity. This is slightly different to the Frankish community, though. While there is a notional shared past, there is no claim to a long line of descent for all Frisians going back to heroic ancestors, as there was for the Franks. This is probably because both authors had to accept the reality of the continued existence of pagan Frisians, and these were most certainly not part of the community. This community was imagined not as ethnic, but as Christian, and in this sense fits with wider trends in the contemporary Carolingian world. Both authors even appeal to this wider unity, highlighting the links between Christian Frisia and the growing Carolingian realm and its Christianity. The Franks and their subject peoples shared not just a religion with the Frisians, but also spiritual figureheads in Willibrord, Boniface and Gregory of Utrecht. Moreover, they shared a common enemy in pagans beyond the Frankish

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<sup>162</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.21: ‘*radix sceleris Widukind, dux Saxonum... fecit Fresones Christi fidem relinquere et immolare idolis, iuxta morem erroris pristini.*’

<sup>163</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.6.

<sup>164</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 113-4.

borders. This was crucial for both the authors and for the region, as it meant Frisia – or rather Christian Frisia – had become a true part of the community of the *regnum Francorum*. What Frisia brought to this Christian community was the missionary tradition going back to Willibrord and Boniface, which in the ninth century was brought into play by people like Liudger to expand the boundaries of the *regnum* even further.

### 3.3.3 Pagan practices and Christian miracles

Thus far, we have found little interest from our sources in the practices and beliefs of the pagans living east of the Rhine in the eighth century, although we have hinted a greater knowledge of them existed with our discussion of Alfrid's portrayal of pagans. We shall now compare what Alfrid had to say with a text that had even more to say about pagan practices in eighth-century Frisia, and which depicted a very different missionary narrative than that found in our previous texts: *Vita Vulframni*. We have already seen the attempts of Frankish churchmen to define paganism, which often consisted of lists of forbidden rituals and beliefs. What we have in these hagiographical texts is rather different; here we find depictions of rituals and beliefs actually being performed by pagans, even if the performances come to us through the medium of Christian authors. Such depictions served a different purpose to the lists composed for church councils and legislation. Rather than attempting to define paganism, the hagiographers were displaying God's power and superiority over the superstitious pagans.

Despite its complex compositional history, in the form we have it now, *Vita Vulframni* seems to represent a response to *Vita Willibrordi*. It certainly engages with some of the same points raised by Alcuin and Willibald, particularly regarding the importance of miracles. At the same time, the text also features important insights into the nature of Frisian paganism that are comparable with Alfrid's portrayal of Liudger's pagan great-grandmother. Since *Vita Vulframni* was compiled at the turn of the ninth century and *Vita Liudgeri* in the 840s, well after the events they describe, we must wonder about the reality of what these sources have to say about paganism. Indeed, James Palmer argues Alfrid's knowledge came from penitentials, and anything portraying the reality is coincidental.<sup>165</sup> But there is little

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<sup>165</sup> Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons*, p. 135.

if anything in the early medieval penitentials that reflects Alfrid's portrayals, let alone those found in *Vita Vulframni*.<sup>166</sup> With this in mind, we can accept each author had access to sources which preserved the knowledge of these practices: Alfrid was a Frisian, and a member of the same family as Liudger, which could trace its ancestry back to pagans;<sup>167</sup> the monastery of St Wandrille, meanwhile, counted a number of Frisians amongst its community, as well as those who had worked as missionaries in Frisia: Wulfram himself and his companion (at least in the *Vita*'s account) Wando, who later became abbot of the monastery.<sup>168</sup>

In both texts, the insights we gain about Frisian paganism are linked with miraculous events, and specifically with victims of sacrifice or murder being saved by divine intervention. Two such miracles are described in detail in *Vita Vulframni*, though others are hinted at. In the first, Wulfram encounters a boy called Ovo being led by Radbod and his followers to be sacrificed by hanging.<sup>169</sup> Wulfram pleads with Radbod to allow the boy to go free, but the pagan leader is determined, stating whoever had been chosen by fate must be sacrificed to the gods. So the sacrifice was carried out, but Wulfram was able to revive the boy after two hours, and he goes on to become a monk at St Wandrille; the author also notes this deed led to many Frisians being converted and baptised.<sup>170</sup> Later Wulfram encounters two young boys who had been chosen by lots to be sacrificed in a tidal pool.<sup>171</sup> Again the saint miraculously saves the children, who go on to become monks at St Wandrille, and wins more converts for Christianity. While narrating this story the author also includes information about the other way in which victims could be obtained and sacrificed:

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<sup>166</sup> See J.T. McNeill and H.M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance: A Translation of the Principal libri poenitentiales and Selections from Related Documents* (Columbia N.Y., 1938).

<sup>167</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.1-6.

<sup>168</sup> For Frisians in the community see *Vita Vulframni*, pref., 6-7; Levison, *England and the Continent*, p. 57, n. 2. For Wando's somewhat troubled abbacy, which began with the deposition of his predecessor Benignus by Ragamfred and saw his own deposition by Charles Martel, exile to Maastricht and later restoration, see *Gesta abbatum Fontanellensium*, ed. F. Lohier and J. Laporte, *Gesta ss. partum Fontanellensis coenobii* (Rouen, 1936), iii.1, viii.1, ix.1; for assessment, see Wood, 'Saint-Wandrille', pp. 12-14; Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 318. See also Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 92-3.

<sup>169</sup> *Vita Vulframni*, 6.

<sup>170</sup> Note, this Ovo is one of the primary witnesses named as a source of information; Lebecq believes he may have been responsible for beginning the composition of the writings which were later compiled into *Vita Vulframni* and for influencing Wando to develop the writings further; S. Lebecq, 'Traduction du prologue et des chapitres 6 à 10 de le *Vie de Vulfran* du pseudo-Jonas, moine de Fontenelle,' in S. Lebecq (ed.), *Hommes, mers et terres du Nord au début du Moyen Âge I: Peuples, cultures, territoires*, (Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2011), pp. 95-101.

<sup>171</sup> *Vita Vulframni*, 8.

The worst custom belonging to the aforesaid *dux* [Radbod], invented by diabolic deceit, was that the bodies of condemned disloyal men were obtained in different ways for ritual offerings of the gods – and not of the gods but of detestable spirits – some by punishments of gladiators, others hanging from gibbets, others torn away from life by the most grievous traps; and others he submerged with diabolic inspiration in the waves of seas or rivers.<sup>172</sup>

So it was not only those chosen by lots or by fate that were sacrificed, but also those who displeased Radbod. Since Radbod also acts as a kind of overseer for both the sacrifices, it seems he had a central place in such pagan rites.

In narrating Liudger's origins and family history, Altfrid presents us with his own insights into Frisian paganism. Since Altfrid was keen to emphasise the family's links with Willibrord, the Franks and Christianity, these insights are not nearly as detailed as those found in *Vita Vulframni*. Indeed, we learn nothing of the paternal side of the family before Wrsing's conversion and baptism. We do, however, learn when Liudger's mother Liafburg was born, her grandmother was still a pagan 'who entirely rejected the Catholic faith.'<sup>173</sup> It is not religion that comes between the grandmother and her Christian daughter Adelburg, but rather the latter's inability to give birth to a son. On the birth of yet another daughter, the grandmother decides to have the child killed, and Altfrid tells us 'it was the custom of the pagans that if anyone wished to kill a son or daughter, they could kill one who had not had earthly food.'<sup>174</sup> The grandmother thus sends her attendants (*lictors*) to drown the child, who at this point had not yet eaten. The child miraculously clung to the sides of the basin into which she had been cast, and was saved by a woman who fed her honey, thus preventing any further attempts to murder her, although apparently it was not safe for her to return home until after the grandmother's death.<sup>175</sup> There is an intriguing support of this story from *Lex Frisionum*, which lists unfed children as among those who could be killed without penalty.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> *Vita Vulframni*, 8: 'Mos pessimus, diabolica fraude inventus, praedicto incredulorum duci inerat, ut corpora hominum damnatorum in suorum sollempniss deorum – et non deorum, sed daemoniorum execrabilia – sepiissime diversis litaret modis, quosdam videlicet gladiatorum animadversionibus interimens, alios patibulis appendens, alios laqueis acerbissime vitam extorquens; praeterea et alios marinorum sive aquarum fluctibus instinctu diabolico submergebat.'

<sup>173</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.6: 'aviam gentilem... abrenunciantem omnino fidei catholicae.'

<sup>174</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.6: 'quia sic erat mors paganorum, ut si filium aut filiam necare voluisset absque cibo terreno necarentur.'

<sup>175</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.6-7.

<sup>176</sup> *Lex Frisionum*, ed. K. A. Eckhardt and A. Eckhardt, *MGH Fontes iuris Germanici Antiqui in usum scholarum seperatum editi* 12 (Hanover, 1982), v.1: 'infans ab utero sublatus et enecatus a matre.' Note, Krogmann has suggested *enecatus* should read *nec altus*; W. Krogmann, 'Die friesische Sage von der Findung des Rechts', *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte*,

The stories narrated in both these texts show a strong link between the Frisians and water. In *Vita Liudgeri* the method chosen for killing the child is drowning. Likewise, while drowning is not the only method of sacrifice mentioned in *Vita Vulframni*, it is certainly the most prominent, and the one which leads to Wulfram's most dramatic miracle: rather than simply praying for the boys to be saved, he walks across the water, 'as the apostle Peter came over the waters to the Lord', and rescues them personally.<sup>177</sup> Again, we can find support for this idea of the importance of water, and the tides in particular, in *Lex Frisionum*. In a law that appears to be a pagan survival, but which may have had an application in a Christian context, the code stipulates anyone who desecrates a temple must be taken to the shore, placed on the sand and, when the tides comes in, his ears will be cut off he will be castrated and sacrificed 'to the gods whose temple he violated.'<sup>178</sup>

Yet, while these depictions are interesting from the point of view of learning about Frisian paganism, they were being put to a particular use in both texts: when a boy has been hung, Wulfram raises him from the dead; when two boys are about to be drowned by the tide, Wulfram rescues them; when a girl is being drowned in a basin, she miraculously clings to the side until someone arrives to rescue her. In each case the Christian God triumphs over pagan rites and practices through miraculous intervention, thus displaying his power to the pagans. As we have seen, though, miracles could be a contentious issue for authors writing about missionaries, especially when placed alongside the much more universally accepted tool of preaching. We should not understate the emphasis on preaching in *Vita Vulframni*, since the saint is said to specifically have gone to Frisia to preach to the people, and we even receive an example of what he preached:

he sailed to Frisia and announced the word of God to that people and their *dux* Radbod, saying that they are not gods which are made by the hands of men; being created of wooden materials and stone, and not of God, they should be cut back and consumed by fire, or formed into vessels for human use, and certainly they should be thrown out with contempt and should be destroyed and trampled into the earth by feet. Rather, God should be understood by incomprehensible majesty, invisible to

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*Germanistische Abteilung*, 84 (1967), 72-127, at p. 115. For disagreement with this interpretation, see H. Seims, *Studien zur Lex Frisionum* (Ebelsbach am Main, 1980), p. 336.

<sup>177</sup> *Vita Vulframni*, 8: 'more apostoli Petri, super aquas ad Dominum venientis.'

<sup>178</sup> *Lex Frisionum*, Additio xi.1: 'Qui fanum effregerit, et ibi aliquid de sacris tulerit, ducitur ad mare, et in sabulo, quod accessus maris operire solte, finduntur aures eius, et castratur, et immolatur Diis quorum templa violavit.'

human eyes, omnipotent and eternal, who created heaven and earth and manly and human descent, which he rules and judges in all fairness.<sup>179</sup>

But *Vita Vulframni* is actually much more about miracles than preaching. After this first mention of the saint's preaching, miracles come to dominate the account, and they are used as a tool for conversion much more often and explicitly than they had been in *Vita Bonifatii*. In *Vita Liudgeri*, on the other hand, miracles are simply a demonstration of the saint's holiness, and the primary tools of Liudger and his companions are preaching and pastoral care, although it is worth noting Altfred followed Alcuin's model in having the second half of his text dedicated to miracles performed by Liudger. So while these authors were able to give a more rounded portrayal of pagans by telling their audiences something about pagan practices and rituals, this was still part of the on-going discourse about the nature of missionary work. In no way did the authors sympathise with the pagans they described, who remained clear antagonists to the missionary heroes and outsiders to the community.

### 3.3.4 An alternative view of mission: *Vita altera Bonifatii*

The Frisian version of Boniface's life, a text known as *Vita altera Bonifatii*, is perhaps the most unusual of the hagiographical texts we have so far looked at, but it gives an insight into missionary thought that is radically different from the others, whilst still remaining part of the Carolingian political and religious discourse. That it was composed in Utrecht at the Church of St Martin some time before 830, and that it was later revised by Bishop Radbod of Utrecht (899-917) – perhaps for a copy to be sent to Fulda – are the only details which can be ascertained about the text, and, with the exception of the place of composition, even these are not certain.<sup>180</sup> *Vita altera* is a highly metaphorical, even metaphysical text, which presents Boniface's career not with Liudger's focus on preaching in pagan areas, or with Willibald's multi-faceted coverage, but as a constant struggle against various foes and as an attempt to cure men's inner maladies.

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<sup>179</sup> *Vita Vulframni*, 4: 'Sequanae mare introiens Gallicum, navigavit Fresiam et genti illius ac duci eius Rathbodo verbum Dei adnuntiabat, dicens, deos non esse, qui hominum minibus facti essent; Dei creandi materiam lignum vel lapidem esse non posse, quorum recisurae vel igni absumerentur vel in vasa quaelibet humani usus formarentur vel certe despectui foras proicerentur et pedibus conculcata in terram verterentur. Deum potius intelligendum maiestate incomprehensibilem, humanis oculis invisibilem, omnipotentem, aeternum, qui caelum et terram, maria et humanum genus creasset, reget et iudicaturus esset orbem in aequitate.'

<sup>180</sup> W. Levison (ed.), 'Vitae sancti Bonifatii archiepiscopi Moguntini', *MGH SRG 57* (Hanover, 1905), pp. xlix-liv; Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 102-3; Kehl, *Kult und Nachleben*, p. 140.

Before continuing, it is worth saying a bit more about the compositional history of the text. One manuscript attributes the text to Bishop Radbod, but while this would provide us with an author and firm period of composition, it appears to be a false lead. Instead, the text was almost certainly composed by a priest at the church of St Martin in Utrecht, probably in the first half of the ninth century.<sup>181</sup> The first conclusion is reasonably easy to establish, as the author refers to St Martin at various points and mentions the special relationship between Martin and Utrecht.<sup>182</sup> The date is on less firm ground, but there are several indications as to when the text was composed. In his *Vita Liudgeri* Altfred mentions Boniface was martyred at Dokkum and notes this location is verified by a certain text.<sup>183</sup> *Vita altera* is the earliest text to provide this information, so it seems the obvious candidate. We have already noted Altfred wrote *Vita Liudgeri* when he was abbot of Werden, in the 840s, giving us a reasonable *terminus ante quem* for *Vita altera*'s composition.

This theory is consolidated by the way in which the author of the text refers to the Northmen. When discussing Boniface's origin on the island of Britannia he says the Angles living there had recently suffered an invasion by northern *pyratas* whom they had easily defeated and pushed back out of their land.<sup>184</sup> Altfred saw the Northmen as a serious threat to the Frisian community, and anachronistically treated them as such in *Vita Liudgeri*. Bishop Radbod, meanwhile, lived through a period of intense and violent contact between the Northmen and Frisia and the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and wrote about the Vikings far more harshly than the author of *Vita altera*.<sup>185</sup> It seems likely, then, the latter was writing significantly before Radbod, and even before Altfred, so probably before 830, when the first wave of Viking raids gave way to more dedicated attempts at invasion and settlement. So what about Bishop Radbod? Rather than being the text's original author, it appears he revised it in some way in order to send a copy to Fulda.<sup>186</sup> While it is likely the text as we have it now represents the revised version, the extent of Radbod's revision is difficult to determine, although as demonstrated by Levison, stylistically *Vita altera* bears little resemblance to Radbod's known hagiographical works,<sup>187</sup> and so we

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<sup>181</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, pp. 102-3.

<sup>182</sup> *Vita altera*, 3, 22.

<sup>183</sup> Altfred, *Vita Liudgeri*, 5.

<sup>184</sup> *Vita altera*, 6.

<sup>185</sup> Radbod of Utrecht, *Libello de Miraculo sancti Martini*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH SS*, 15, 2 (Hanover, 1888), 4-6.

<sup>186</sup> Kehl, *Kult und Nachleben*, p. 140.

<sup>187</sup> See Levison, 'Vitae sancti Bonifatii archiepiscopi Moguntini', pp. xlix-liv.

should assume he left the majority of the work and its narrative untouched. Let us now turn to this unusual narrative and what its author had to say about Boniface.

Overall, the author of the *Vita altera* has the same key events of Boniface's career found in Willibald's account; namely his first, failed mission to Frisia, his three trips to Rome – and being made bishop during the second of these – his time spent working with Willibrord in Frisia, his work in Germania and the Frankish kingdoms, and his final journey to Frisia which resulted in his martyrdom. All of this is presented very differently to how it had been in the earlier text, however. The emphasis is first and foremost on Boniface's encounters with paganism, and in this sense the text could sit alongside other accounts of missionary activity. But the paganism in *Vita altera* is vastly different to that of other texts, being even more radically 'other' than the Frisian killers of the saint in Willibald's text. The Boniface of *Vita altera* first encounters pagans during his initial journey to Frisia, but we are told little of what occurred at this time; there is not even a parallel to Willibald's graphic account of Radbod's persecutions, and instead the saint preaches to and converts the idol worshippers until the impudent opposition of the majority convinces him to return home.<sup>188</sup>

The author gives the first explicit description of Boniface's pagan enemies when the saint comes from Rome to Germania, but the pagans of the *Vita altera* are not misrepresented political figures; they are the very stuff of Classical mythology. They are depicted by the author as worshipping 'demons and ghosts in their sacred groves and shrines', along with 'fauns and satyrs which the pagans called woodland gods' and 'dryads and dell-nymphs and other magical gods and portents'.<sup>189</sup> In the previous chapter, we allowed for the possibility some pagans in Germania were worshipping gods they called Jupiter and Mercury, but here we have pure, unadulterated *interpretatio Romana*: there is little, if any chance this is anything other than classical learning applied to eighth-century Frisia. Most curiously of all, these are physical beings which Boniface is able to literally root out with his scythe before persuading the Christians to hang them. The authors lack of interest in

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<sup>188</sup> *Vita altera Bonifatii*, 8.

<sup>189</sup> *Vita altera Bonifatii*, 8: 'in suis lucis ac delubris larvas lumuresque coluerant... faunos et sathyros, quos nonnulli paganorum silvestres deos appellant... driades napeasque et cetera huiusmodi magis portant quam numina.'



presenting a believable portrayal of paganism is confirmed when he narrates Boniface's return to Germania after his second visit to Rome; the saint resumes the battle against paganism, but it is now presented as a Biblical adversary, the 'Philistine Cyclops' – that is, Goliath – with Boniface as a 'Davidic warrior' taking up his pastoral satchel and stone of divine law to battle the 'unremitting adversary'.<sup>190</sup> Likewise, when Boniface travelled to Frisia at the end of his life, he 'perceived for himself that he would again take up the satchel with his stones, and the battle with the Philistine Goliath would continue' and 'he would vie with all the strengths of the Devil'.<sup>191</sup>

The author of *Vita altera* did not shy away from presenting Boniface as a martyr, as Liudger had done, so he clearly accepted the importance of such a miraculous act. Yet the martyrdom as he portrays it is not the neat narrative of Willibald's *Vita Bonifatii*. Instead, what we find when Boniface returns to Frisia is a metaphorical comparison with St Paul's journey to Miletus, even though such a comparison makes little sense, as we can see from what the author himself writes.<sup>192</sup> What is most important for the author, though, is not the actual comparison of the events, but rather the spiritual comparison between the two saints, each of whom preached the word of God, and each of whom was killed for his efforts. However, the author adds a story about Boniface defending himself with a gospel book, which he explains he had learned from an old woman who had been present at the saint's death.<sup>193</sup> Like the place of Boniface's death, this is a detail first written down in this text but which has become an accepted part of the saint's story. The author was clearly attempting to engage with a local audience, then, as we can also see from his emphasis on the partnership of Boniface and Willibrord, in which he presents them almost as equals.

This local engagement is further demonstrated by the author's distrust of miracles. In this, he was much closer to Alcuin and Altfred than he was in his attitude to martyrdom. In fact, he stands even more firmly against the miraculous than either of these authors, as can be seen from the strange epilogue to the *Vita*, in

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<sup>190</sup> *Vita altera Bonifatii*, 10: 'Porro Bonifacius... Germanos suos ilico revisit fortissimumque prelium cum spurio cyclope committens... castra Israelitica a depredatione Phylistinorum... eripuit.'

<sup>191</sup> *Vita altera Bonifatii*, 13: 'statimque sensit fortis athlete sibi iterum peram cum lapidibus suis sumendam, iterum cum Golyath Phylistheo bellum gerendum... cum dyabolo totis viribus certaturus erat.'

<sup>192</sup> *Vita altera*, 14.

<sup>193</sup> *Vita altera*, 16.

which the author responds to criticisms from his *fratres*.<sup>194</sup> Surprisingly, the brothers did not take issue with the otherworldly narrative and imagery of the text, but rather with the lack of miracles, and they accused the author both of having misrepresented Boniface and of having deprived them of the usual material contained in a saint's *Life*. The author responded; in fact, he had represented Boniface perfectly, since the saint was not a worker of outward, physical miracles, but rather worked to cure men of their inner maladies, and he did this by teaching them the correct form of Christianity. Such an attitude seems to have found particular resonance in ninth-century Frisia,<sup>195</sup> as we have seen from how Alcuin and Alfrid approached the issue. Nevertheless, the very fact the author of *Vita altera* still had to defend his literary decision to work within this trend shows there were some who expected wondrous miracles in their saints' *Lives*, and it is unlikely this feeling was restricted to the clergy of St Martin's Utrecht. Perhaps most importantly, though, despite the peculiarity of his narrative, we can see this author was clearly aware of and contributing to the wider debates about the nature of missionary work. But it is worth returning to peculiarities, as they have more to tell us about the author's intended message.

There are many scenes in *Vita altera* which are unusual and highly metaphorical, and which represent little of the reality of either eighth-century paganism or missionary work. But even if, as Ian Wood has argued, this depiction was a literary construction by the author which implies he had no interest in the reality of the situation in Germania,<sup>196</sup> it was nevertheless a key part of how he meant his work to be understood by its audience. Part of this was obviously an appropriation of the Bonifatian tradition for Utrecht, with its theology firmly grounded in mission. But clearly the target audience was not the missionaries themselves, who would have immediately recognised the flaws in the author's presentation, nor was it those who intended to become missionaries, since it contains little that would have been useful to them. Instead, the target audience was the communities already associated with Boniface, particularly Utrecht, but also Dokkum, Mainz and Fulda; after the account

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<sup>194</sup> *Vita altera*, 18-23.

<sup>195</sup> W.S. van Egmond, 'Misgivings about Miracles in Carolingian Hagiography from Utrecht', in K.E. Olsen, A. Harbus, and T. Hofstra (eds), *Miracles and the Miraculous in Medieval Germanic and Latin Literature* (Leuven, 2004), pp. 69-79, at pp. 75-7.

<sup>196</sup> Wood, *Missionary Life*, p. 105.

of Boniface's death the author acknowledges these four places have since experienced signs of Boniface's blessings.<sup>197</sup>

In fact, there are hints from within the text these places were not just the target audience, but the author considered inferior all those who did not accept Boniface as their spiritual leader. Throughout the text the author levels criticism – sometimes subtle, sometimes unsubtle – at those Boniface comes into contact with. Boniface's apostolic lifestyle and nurturing of the young Catholic faith in Frisia are contrasted with the clergy of both the saint's and the author's time, who are described as lazy farmers. The *topos* is found in other hagiographical texts – the most obvious example in this context being Liudger's *Vita Gregorii*<sup>198</sup> – but here it seems to form part of a wider picture of implicit criticism that runs through *Vita altera*. There is a marked ambivalence towards the Papacy in *Vita altera*, in which the author seems to balance a respect for Rome's patron saints and pontifical status with the feeling the city is no more important than those associated with Saints Martin and Boniface.<sup>199</sup> The author also stresses Boniface was made bishop to watch over the destitute and needy, but there is no mention of the role of secular powers in establishing Boniface as bishop of Mainz, nor is there any mention of secular support anywhere in the text. This contrasts sharply with the image of mission and community presented by the author's contemporaries Liudger and Altfred, who emphasised the relations between saints and rulers.

What should we make of this unusual presentation of Boniface? The saint's physical and metaphorical battle with paganism seems to be the most prominent feature of the narrative. The idea of saints as pseudo-military figures and 'soldiers of Christ' was not unusual in the medieval period; from the Bonifatian hagiography is Eigil's portrayal of Sturm as equipped with spiritual weaponry,<sup>200</sup> while from the Merovingian hagiography there is Leudgar, who armed himself with 'the breastplate of faith and the helmet of salvation' and 'the sword of the spirit'.<sup>201</sup> There is something more to the Boniface of this text, though, and it rests with the idea the saint did battle not with the pagans, but with paganism as a concept, represented

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<sup>197</sup> *Vita altera Bonifatii*, 17.

<sup>198</sup> *Vita altera Bonifatii*, 4; *Vita Gregorii*, 2.

<sup>199</sup> See *Vita altera Bonifatii*, 2, 3, 7, 10, 11.

<sup>200</sup> Eigil, *Vita Sturmi*, 7.

<sup>201</sup> *Passio Leudegarii*, 8.

particularly as Goliath, the Biblical enemy of David.<sup>202</sup> The author even has the pope refer to Boniface as a ‘Davidic warrior’, placing him in the context of an eternal struggle between God’s people and their enemies.<sup>203</sup> Add to this the author’s assertion Boniface was the healer of men’s inner maladies, with the comparison to David as the healer of Saul,<sup>204</sup> and it seems clear the reader is meant to see Boniface as the direct successor of David.

Charlemagne was also compared to the biblical hero. Even during his lifetime he was nicknamed ‘David’ by members of his court circle, and after his death chroniclers and poets were keen to continue this comparison.<sup>205</sup> The comparison between the great warrior-kings was obvious enough, especially in contexts where the Frankish Empire could be hailed as a New Israel, but the imagery of David and his son Solomon, to whom Charlemagne was also compared, contained a sacral aspect related to preaching, teaching and the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. This aspect could also be applied to Charlemagne, since he had spread Christianity through his conquests and had strengthened the faith of the Franks themselves through his policy of *correctio*. But for the author of the *Vita altera* this imagery was just as applicable to his version of Boniface, the man who had fought paganism alone, just as David had fought Goliath. This second David had also preceded Charlemagne in his leadership of the Franks, although the author presents a condensed version of this part of the saint’s career. Finally, unlike Charlemagne, who was a king with an interest in religion, Boniface was a priest, and as a bishop may have seemed to have a better claim to leadership of the Christian people, at least to a fellow priest. This may be what lies behind the author’s comparison of Boniface to Melchizedek,<sup>206</sup> a Biblical character referred to in Genesis and Psalms as both a priest and a king, and interpreted in the Letter to the Hebrews as the anticipation of the priesthood of Christ and justification of the abandonment of the

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<sup>202</sup> 1 Samuel, 17.

<sup>203</sup> *Vita altera Bonifatii*, 10.

<sup>204</sup> *Vita altera Bonifatii*, 21; note the author attributes ‘medicinal knowledge’ to David instead of his skill with the lyre which is the cure in the Biblical account; 1 Samuel, xvi.23.

<sup>205</sup> G. Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance* (London, 1985), pp. 4-12. On the cultural significance of nicknames at Charlemagne’s court, see M. Garrison, ‘The Social World of Alcuin: Nicknames at York and the Carolingian Court’, in L.A.J.R. Houwen and A.A. MacDonald (eds), *Alcuin of York: Scholar at the Carolingian Court* (Groningen, 1998), pp. 59-79.

<sup>206</sup> *Vita altera*, 4. On the comparison of Emperor Justinian I to Melchizedek in the sixth century, see O.G., von Simson, *Sacred Fortress: Byzantine Art and Statecraft in Ravenna* (Princeton, 1987), 31-8.

Levitical priesthood and law.<sup>207</sup> We can clearly hear an echo of imperial leadership combined with priestly exhortation in the passage where Boniface is appointed to Mainz: ‘And raising his tents there beside a channel of the River Rhine, behold! the innumerable Frankish people of both sexes approached him, as he called them to witness and prayed’.<sup>208</sup> Thus, for the author of the *Vita altera*, it was Boniface, not Charlemagne, who was the true leader of the faithful, the true defender of Christianity, and the strongest warrior in the battle against paganism and the Devil.

But even if this is a denunciation of the author’s contemporaries, it is ultimately part of their discourse. After all, if we are right to imagine this author attempting to illustrate Boniface’s importance to a world which had not fully acknowledged it despite the saint’s efforts in life then we are not far removed from the discourse of *admonitio*, *correctio* and *parrhesia* that emerged in the first half of the ninth century.<sup>209</sup> In *Vita altera*, Boniface stands (almost) alone against paganism and the sins of the world: he is the good architect who builds faith with hope and an understanding of scripture and is the good farmer who nurtures the Catholic faith in place of faithlessness and encourages virginity in place of passion and charity in place of avarice, in contrast with the builders and farmers of the author’s own time who rely on gold and silver and are lax and sleep while others engage the plough. In such ways the author exhorts his audience to accept Boniface as their spiritual healer and rely on his guidance to show them the way to true faith.

In this text, then, we have an author who engaged in the on-going discourse about mission, but who did so in a very different way than his contemporaries. Despite being based in Utrecht he was not interested in promoting the links between Frisia and Francia, or in emphasising the progress of Christianity in the region: his text tells us very little about either. Instead, his primary aim was to present a

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<sup>207</sup> For recent interpretation of Hebrews, see A.C. Mitchell, *Hebrews* (Collegeville, Minnesota, 2007), pp. 138-59; P.T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Nottingham, 2010), pp. 244-85. On the early development of Jewish and Christian interpretations of Melchizedek, see F.L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century AD and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cambridge, 1976); J.L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as it was at the Start of the Common Era* (Harvard, 1998), pp. 275-93.

<sup>208</sup> *Vita altera Bonifatii*, 11: ‘*Erigente autem illo tentoria secus alveum Reni fluminis, ecce! populus Francorum innumerabilis promiscui sexus ei obviam processit, obscerans simul et contestans.*’ I am grateful to Mayke de Jong and Marco Mostert for their help in understanding the significance of this passage.

<sup>209</sup> See de Jong, *Penitential State*. For a specific case-study, see G. Vocino, ‘Framing Ambrose in the Resources of the Past: Late Antique and Early Medieval Sources for a Carolingian Portrait of Ambrose’, in C. Gantner, R. McKitterick and S. Meeder (eds), *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, Forthcoming).

metaphorical, metaphysical and Biblical battle between Christianity and paganism, which had been led first and foremost by Boniface. While the usual points of debate about mission – preaching, miracles and martyrdom – feature in the text, even these take second place to Boniface’s militaristic nature and his role as a spiritual healer.

### 3.4 Between Franks and Scandinavians

Because Liudger died in 809, Altfred’s *Vita Liudgeri* draws to a close an overarching narrative of eighth-century Frisia and its inhabitants and missionaries. Altfred, however, wrote around thirty years after Liudger’s death, and his own concerns inevitably intruded into his text. In the world of the mid-ninth century it was not the pagans of Frisia or Saxony who represented a threat to the Frankish community. These regions were now reasonably integrated, but represented the border between the Frankish world and the world beyond which, for Altfred, remained a world of otherness and represented the same pagan-military threat the Frisians and Saxons once had. The pagans who threatened Altfred and his contemporaries were the Northmen, still unconverted and largely beyond the influence of the Frankish missionaries, but increasingly important to the Frankish world.

Towards the end of *Vita Liudgeri* Altfred narrates a scene in which Liudger tells his sister of a dream, in which he saw ‘the sun fleeing beyond the sea from the northern regions with the foulest mists following.’ The sun passes out of sight, and the mists occupy the coastal regions of Frisia, although after much time the sun returns and drives the mists away.<sup>210</sup> When questioned by his sister, Liudger reveals the mists to be the Northmen, who will visit great wars of persecution and ‘immeasurable devastation’ on the Frisians. Having lived through these attacks, Altfred is able to report many churches and monasteries had been destroyed and farms left uninhabited. He makes it clear, however, this was happening because of the sins of the Frisians themselves; he also says they are still awaiting the return of the sun and the restoration of the Lord’s peace. This appears to be a clear case of Altfred projecting his own concerns onto the past, but through the ninth-century presentations of the Scandinavians we can see how Frisia had come to be seen firmly as part of the Frankish community. By being the primary target for Danish

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<sup>210</sup> *Vita Liudgeri*, i.27.

attacks on the Carolingian Empire, Frisia gained a central place in the ninth-century annals, a situation quite different from what we saw in the eighth century, when it was barely mentioned. This central place in turn highlighted the links between Frisians and the rest of the Frankish world, especially because of their shared Christianity in opposition to the paganism of the Danes.

The first we hear of Frisia in the ninth century from the historical sources is *ARF*'s report about the region being attacked by a fleet of two hundred Danish ships in 810.<sup>211</sup> After ravaging the coast, the Danes had landed, defeated the Frisians in three battles and imposed a heavy tribute. This was enough to provoke what would be the last campaign Charlemagne would undertake in person, although the Danish King Godefrid was murdered before the matter came to open battle. While the annalist reports Charlemagne had already been considering an expedition against Godefrid, it must say something of Frisia's importance that the emperor – now nearly sixty – chose to march in person to defend this once peripheral and pagan region.

This sense of Frisia as part of the Frankish world is confirmed by the ninth-century *Annales Bertiniani*, *Annales Fuldenses* and *Annales Xantenses*, although it is on the first of these we shall concentrate.<sup>212</sup> The reports for 837 in *Annales Bertiniani* are particularly enlightening. By this time there had already been a number of Danish attacks on Frisia, and Louis the Pious appears to have taken a personal interest and role in the construction of coastal defences. Despite this, the local forces – ‘our men’ – were not able to resist a subsequent attack, and it emerged this was partly because of ‘the disobedience of certain men... Vigorous abbots and *comites* were therefore dispatched to suppress the insubordinate Frisians.’<sup>213</sup> The Frisians seem to have been in an ambiguous situation; on the one hand they were ‘our men,’ but on the other they were being blamed for failure to resist a Danish attack due to their ‘disobedience’, which seems unfortunately close to the Carolingian *topos* of disloyalty and rebellion. It is, however, unlikely disobedience

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<sup>211</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 810.

<sup>212</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. G. Waitz, *MGH SRG* 5 (Hanover, 1883); *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. F Kurze, *MGH SRG* 7 (Hanover, 1891); *Annales Xantenses*, ed. B. de Simson, *MGH SRG* 12 (Hanover, 1909).

<sup>213</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*, s.a. 837: ‘*Qua discussione patuit, partim impossibilitate, partim quorundam inoboedientiam eos inimicis non potuisse resistere. Unde et ad comprimendam Frisionum inoboedientiam strenui abates ac comites directi sunt.*’

was as extreme an accusation as disloyalty, since the Frisians had not been accused of defecting to the Danish side.

Further indications of this two-sided vision of the Frisians come in the reports for 839 and 841. In 839 King Horic of the Danes had sent envoys to Louis who, among other things, complained ‘about the Frisians and their troublesome behaviour.’ What exactly this behaviour was we are not told, but the emperor apparently dispatched leaders to settle the issue.<sup>214</sup> In 841, however, Lothar I placed the Danish leader Harald over Walcheren and the surrounding areas in order to secure his services. The annalist was explicit in how he felt about this:

Truly this crime is utterly detestable to all: that those who had inflicted evil on Christians should be given preference in the lands of the same Christians and the people and churches of Christ; that the persecutors of the Christian faith should become lords over Christians, and Christian people have to serve demon worshippers!<sup>215</sup>

It is therefore clear, for this author at least, the Frisians’ Christianity was more important than their disobedience or troublesome behaviour. They were part of the Frankish-Carolingian community because they were Christians, whereas the Danes and other Northmen remained outside the community because they were pagans, a feature emphasised by the accusation they were demon worshippers. This otherness further reinforces the commonality of Franks and Frisians. It should be noted, however, the annalist displayed no similar outrage when Lothar granted Dorestad to Roric, whom *Annales Xantenses* referred to as ‘the poison of Christianity.’<sup>216</sup>

Such reports of Danish attacks on and attempts to establish rule over Frisia continue into the second half of the ninth century, but it is the events outlined above that form the backdrop to Altfred’s *Vita Liudgeri*, and now we can more fully understand why the hagiographer was so keen to have the Northmen feature in his work. Not only does it place Liudger in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets, foreseeing the doom of Frisia due to sin, it also highlights the importance of the conversion of the region towards which the saint the sins of its inhabitants. The conversion of Frisia placed the region’s inhabitants firmly within the Frankish

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<sup>214</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*, s.a. 839.

<sup>215</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*, s.a. 841: ‘*dignum sane omni detestatione facinus, ut qui mala christianis intolerant idem christianorum terries et populis Christique ecclesiis praeferrentur, ut persecutores fidei christianae domni christianorum existerent, et demonum cultoribus christiani populi deservirent!*’

<sup>216</sup> *Annales Xantenses*, s.a. 873.



community, and this was further emphasised by the Northmen taking up the role of the pagan and military threat that had previously been filled by Saxons and Frisians. Of course, it is likely the situation in Frisia was not as clearly defined as Alfrid wanted it to be, and we should not be surprised to find hints of pagan Frisians wanting a life of piracy and joining the Scandinavians.<sup>217</sup> Such activities made Alfrid's message even more important when aimed at a Frankish, Christian audience however, since Alfrid himself was the Frisian abbot of a Saxon monastery, and so had a particular interest in stressing the Christian and Frankish nature of these regions, as opposed to the pagan hostility of the Northmen.

### 3.5 Conclusion

At the beginning of the eighth century, the Frisians were just one of many peripheral peoples on the edges of the Frankish world, albeit their leader, Radbod, moved firmly within the circles of Frankish political power due to his turbulent relationship with Pippin II and Charles Martel. Because of this, and because of the proximity of Frisia to Austrasia, the Frisians were one of the first peripheral peoples to become a target of the Pippinid-Carolingian wars of expansion. At the same time, because of their ongoing adherence to paganism and geographical position on the edge of mainland Europe, the Frisians were also one of the primary targets for the Anglo-Saxon missionaries who were coming to the continent in increasing numbers. Yet Frisia and the Frisians proved easy neither to conquer nor to convert, as shown by the ambiguous position of the region and its people until at least the end of the eighth century. The Carolingians, though, turned their attention to other peripheral regions, particularly Aquitaine and Saxony, and so the Frisians appear only intermittently in the annals of the period. The *Lives* written about the men who worked in the region tell us somewhat more, although even with these it is difficult to penetrate the missionary concerns of the authors to discover the realities of life in eighth-century Frisia. Yet these hagiographical texts provide us with something even more important, at least for the purpose of this study: they are crucial for tracing the status of Frisia and the Frisians with regard to the community of the *regnum*

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<sup>217</sup> See N.L. IJssenagger, *Friends, Vassals or Foes: Relations and the Representations between Frisians and Scandinavians in the Viking Age, late 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. An analysis of textual and archaeological sources* (unpublished master's thesis, University of Groningen, 2010), pp. 44-5. For an example from the eleventh century, see Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, iv.39.

*Francorum*. The Frisians of the early eighth century were clearly in an ambiguous position at best: for all his involvement in Frankish politics, Radbod remained a pagan and enemy of Charles Martel, so clearly stood outside the community in these regards, while Liudger's grandfather Wrsing was an opponent of Radbod, came to Francia and converted to Christianity, giving him a claim to membership of the community.

This religious duality remained crucial. The Frisians who marched to war alongside the Franks in 789 were not considered part of the *exercitus Francorum*, probably because many were still pagans, and there were those who had fought on the side of Widukind during the early phases of the Saxon Wars, threatening the burgeoning Christian community of Frisia. On a more discursive level, for hagiographers who were not themselves Frisians, the Frisians remained simply a tool for debating the nature of missionary work, and especially the importance of miracles and preaching. While for Willibald this led to an intensely hostile portrayal of Radbod and his people, Alcuin and the author of *Vita Vulframni* were able to present a more rounded image of the Frisian ruler, and to provide their audiences with probably reasonably genuine descriptions of the pagan practices of the Frisians. But even these were not sympathetic enough portrayals for us to think these men considered the pagan Frisians part of the community. It is only when the Frisians themselves started writing about the mission we can see attempts at integration being made, and both Liudger and Alfrid wrote about the missionaries in such a way as to make the Frisians – at least those who were Christians – appear as part of the *regnum Francorum*. The author of *Vita altera Bonifatii* stands in a more ambivalent position in this discourse, but even he saw Boniface as a man who had worked towards the Christianisation of the *regnum*, although he presented this in a rather more confrontational way than our other authors. The efforts of Liudger and Alfrid were supported by the effects of the raids by Northmen that escalated during the first half of the ninth century. These raids proved a threat to all members of the *regnum*, a fact which Alfrid utilised in his *Vita Liudgeri*, and as we saw in the ninth-century annals, they certainly contributed to the sense the Frisians were part of the community. Through the efforts of the missionaries and through the emergence of a new pagan threat on the border of the *regnum*, then, the Frisians were transformed from peripheral pagans to members of the Christian community.

## Conclusion

The transition from Merovingian to Carolingian Francia has long fascinated scholars of early medieval Europe. While the late Merovingian world has now safely been brought out of the shadows of Carolingian propaganda, and while some of the social and political changes which led to the emergence of the Carolingian world have been exposed,<sup>1</sup> the cultural changes require further examination.<sup>2</sup> It is upon some of these cultural aspects we have attempted to focus here.

Our period of study began with the emergence of Frankish identity as a theme through which the history of the community of the *regnum Francorum* could be discussed. This medium was based on the belief in a single Frankish *gens* with a history stretching back to a group of migrants who had fled from the ruins of Troy to the Rhine, and who gave rise to the Franks and their Merovingian kings. The subsequent history of the *gens* had seen struggles and divisions into geographical sub-groups, but the existence and importance of the *gens* – and thus of the Frankish community – was never in question. Rather, the authors who wrote about the history of the Franks or particularly noteworthy members of the community, including saints, were debating the relationships between the various members of the community, and particularly the over-arching relationship between the Neustrian and Austrasian *Teilreiche*.

Like the existence of the *gens Francorum*, membership of the community on the part of these individuals and groups was never in question, but the nature of the community was. Was the community best served by fierce, warlike rulers who kept their subjects in line through fear, or by peaceful kings who negotiated the consensus of the nobility? What was the significance of rule in the *Teilreiche* by separate kings, and what happened when there was only one king for the entire *regnum*? These were particularly crucial questions still open to debate in the early eighth century, as the Neustrians – who thought of themselves as the true Franks – came increasingly under the influence of successive members of an Austrasian

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the work that has been done on the Pippinid appropriation of monastic power and influence, which grew into a wider Carolingian ecclesiastical policy. See particularly, Wood, 'Saint-Wandrille'; Fouracre, *Charles Martel*, pp. 122-6;

<sup>2</sup> The focus on such cultural processes has begun. See, for example, Goosmann, *Memorable Crises*, which traces the changes in the interpretation of recent Carolingian history.

family. But if this family worked towards the stability of the community, as they are presented doing by the *LHF*-author, could their presence in Neustria be a bad thing?

At the same time, these authors were writing about a wider community; that of the entire *regnum Francorum*, which consisted of Franks and non-Franks. The latter, of course, could not be considered part of the Frankish community: they were not part of the group that traced its descent from those ancient Trojan migrants. Terms like ‘Saxon’, ‘Thuringian’ or ‘Slav’, then, were terms of distinction applied to those outside the Frankish community. But these peoples were still ruled by Frankish kings, participated in the political life of the *regnum* and could be a force for either stability or instability, as shown by the actions of Samo and Radulf in the seventh century or Radbod and Eudo in the eighth. Merovingian authors, though, were never as concerned with defining the nature of this wider community as they were with defining the nature of the purely Frankish community. Theirs was a world clearly divided into ethnic groups – at least, such divisions were made to appear clear, but the dividing lines between communities were never that simple.

The period of this study ends with a rather different outlook. The sources of the ninth century – whether Frankish or Frisian – show a concern precisely with the questions Merovingian authors had not addressed about the nature of the wider community of the *regnum Francorum*. In *AMP* and Einhard’s *Life of Charlemagne* we can see negotiations about the relationship between Franks and non-Franks, about loyalty vs rebellion and Christianity vs paganism; the latter can be seen even more clearly in texts about the Frisian mission. In the world of the ninth century, the existence of the *gens Francorum* and the other ethnic groups was still not in question. In fact, these groupings were arguably more important to authors writing about the Carolingian wars of conquest, who attempted to define precisely when various peripheral peoples had been conquered and brought within the community. The Franks were still at the heart of this community, but it was increasingly multi-ethnic in nature, and here we come to the ambiguity of the Carolingian discourse.

At the same time as they pursued wars of conquest against peripheral peoples, the Carolingians promoted the idea these peoples were already technically subject to Frankish rule, so anyone who refused to accept Carolingian rule was a rebel and left the rulers no choice but to pursue their wars. Perhaps less ambiguously, and certainly more explicitly than in the Merovingian period, this was

a Christian community, and there was no place in it for pagans, so any wars fought against pagan peoples were fought not just to bring them under Carolingian rule, but also to bring them to Christianity. These issues could become intertwined, though, as in the case of the conquest of Saxony, where acts of rebellion went hand-in-hand with renunciation of Christianity.

So, it was rebellion or paganism (or both) which placed a group or individual outside the community, not membership of a non-Frankish ethnic group. Rebels and pagans were usually found on the edges of the community itself, though. Indeed, Carolingian authors were more concerned with encouraging a sense of otherness with regard to peoples directly on the fringes of the Frankish world than with regard to those further away. In this way, these authors were at least occasionally able to blame rebellion on individuals leading members of the community astray: thus an entire dynasty of *duces* of Aquitaine (from Eudo to Waifar) was denounced as rebels who not only refused to acknowledge Carolingian rule, but allied themselves with other outsiders – Vascones and Muslims; thus Widukind, the enigmatic Saxon noble who refused to come into Charlemagne's presence and encouraged other Saxons to rebel – and who likewise associated with other outsiders, in this case the Northmen; thus Aistulf, the king of the Lombards who threatened the papacy and reneged on his promises to Pippin III, and met with death by God's judgment as a result. But perhaps even more intriguing are the members of the Carolingian dynasty itself who were held up as peripheral outsiders. Grifo and Tassilo III, both descendants of Charles Martel and both with claims not just to membership of the community, but to positions of authority within it, were portrayed by Carolingian authors as outsiders who had given up their positions in the community for power on the peripheries and who had encouraged others to join them in their acts of rebellion.

For those who accepted Christianity and Carolingian rule, though, membership of the community was assured, and this allowed those in formerly peripheral regions to write about their local communities as part of the wider, Carolingian community. Although the first generations of Anglo-Saxons who had come to the continent had not always enjoyed a warm welcome – as shown by Ebroin's hostility to Wilfrid and Boniface's rivalries with his episcopal peers – by the second half of the eighth century they had cemented their position in the community: their contributions to the spread of Christianity and consolidation of the Frankish Church were undeniable, and these were policies also pursued by the

Carolingians themselves. Those who wanted to portray a formerly pagan region as part of the community had a ready well to tap, then, not by writing an ethnic history of the region, but by writing its Christian history.

The *Lives* of the saints who worked in Frisia show this process in action. The first saints to work in the region – Willibrord, Boniface and Wulfram – were not Frisian, nor were their *Lives* written from a Frisian perspective, but they showed how Christianity had been brought to the region, and in the case of Wulfram, how now Christian Frisians had come to be members of a Frankish monastery in the heart of Neustria. Even Willibald's hostile account of Radbod and the later Frisian pirates ended with local – that is, Frisian – Christians getting revenge for the murder of the saint. Gregory of Utrecht was also not a Frisian, but through his work with Boniface, his leadership of Utrecht after the latter's death and his training of disciples who spread themselves throughout the Frankish world, he both consolidated the missionary community of Frisia and confirmed the place of Frisia within the Carolingian community. His Frisian disciple, Liudger, not only furthered the Christianisation of Frisia, but worked with Charlemagne to further the Christianisation of Saxony.

Yet Liudger's biographer, Altfrid, was not afraid to engage with Frisia's pagan past. He did not deny his subject's ancestors had been pagan, nor did he deny there were still pagans in Liudger's day who had sided with Widukind and attempted to return Frisia to paganism. These pagans, however, were clearly not members of the community precisely because of their paganism, because this was a Christian community, not an ethnic Frisian community. In fact, Altfrid even used Liudger's pagan ancestors to highlight the triumph of God over pagan superstition and the links between Frisia and the Pippinids. In this way he engaged with a wider discourse about the nature of missionary work that addressed the importance of the miraculous and the support of secular authority.

These three discourses – of the Frankish community, of the wider community and of the place of formerly peripheral regions within the community – have formed the structure of this study, but we should not be tempted to see them as separate or independent discourses. Placed alongside one another, we can see how each contributed to the culture of Frankish society from the seventh to the early ninth

century. The late Merovingian period saw the re-interpretation of the *regnum Francorum* in the aftermath of decades of civil wars and the triumph of Chlothar II which brought these to an end; through the ongoing political processes – both violent and peaceful – and through their portrayal by historians and hagiographers, this interpretation of the *regnum* as a political, social and cultural entity based on the unity of the Franks despite their apparent divisions was consolidated.

This consolidation was crucial because it allowed the Pippinid-Carolingians to turn the military activity of the Franks outwards, against the peoples who had occupied a peripheral place in the community of the *regnum* for two centuries. Whether they did this through a genuine sense of ‘restoring’ Frankish hegemony (perhaps as part of an Austrasian legacy), through a desire to provide the Franks with a common enemy, or because there actually were anti-Carolingian sentiments among the peripheral peoples is difficult to say; it was likely a combination of factors.<sup>3</sup> Wars against peripheral enemies, however, required peace at home, loyalty to the Carolingian dynasty and an even greater emphasis on the unity of the Franks: the *Teilreiche* still had a historical and geographical significance, but little place in the Frankish identity being utilised by the Carolingians. From the middle of the eighth century, then, authors wrote about the history of Franks increasingly as the history of the Carolingians, simultaneously reflecting and feeding into cultural changes.

Whatever the original reasoning for the Carolingian wars of conquest, though, they actually created a Frankish hegemony over peripheral peoples more substantial than anything achieved under the Merovingians, and this required an engagement with the wider community. In other words, the consolidation of the unified Frankish community led to a situation wherein the place of non-Franks in the community could be negotiated. Because the existence of the Frankish *gens* and community was not in question, the Carolingians and those who wrote about them turned to more ostensibly inclusive traits to define their wider, multi-ethnic community. They stressed loyalty to the Carolingian dynasty and acceptance of Christianity as the most important traits for members of the community. These were already crucial aspects of the Frankish community, but they were not exclusively Frankish traits, and could easily be taken up by other groups. Christianity already

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<sup>3</sup> On the specifically Austrasian origins of Carolingian kingship, see Stegeman, *Austrasian Identity*, pp. 85-91.

had been adopted by many groups, and it allowed for the integration of missionaries who were not themselves Franks, or even from the *regnum Francorum* (even if there was a long history of contact between the Frankish and Anglo-Saxon worlds).<sup>4</sup>

These traits were not solely inclusive though, because they created an inherent dichotomy between those who accepted them and those who did not. In the Carolingian sources, therefore, we find a sense of exclusion and otherness not present in the Merovingian sources. The Carolingian sources are about the Franks and their allies fighting against rebels who refused to submit to Carolingian authority, or who did so and then reneged on their promises, and they are about missionaries fighting paganism and heretical Christianity. On the surface, such accounts appear black and white. The early Carolingian world is divided between loyal subjects and rebels, and between Christians and pagans. But this was just another way of negotiating the nature of the community. ‘Rebels’ could not be rebels unless they were meant to be part of the community, and missionaries worked with the intention of bringing pagans to Christianity. The Carolingian community, then, was not exclusive but aggressively inclusive: the purpose of the external wars fought by the Carolingians and of the activities undertaken by the missionaries was to create a Christian community and bring the peripheral peoples into it.

The exclusivity of the community – the sense of otherness – came with hindsight applied to those who had not accepted their place in the community. After all, Einhard may have been the author most hostile towards the Saxons, but he ultimately acknowledged they had become *unus populus* with the Franks. Even if such a sentiment was misguided, he was correct the Saxons eventually had been brought into the community. The same could not be said for individuals like Radbod, Eudo and his descendants, or even Grifo, who had all died refusing Carolingian authority, and in Radbod’s case had died a pagan. That individuals were judged in this way should not be overlooked: the Carolingians engaged in debate about the leadership of the community just as much as did their Merovingian predecessors. As a result, the idea emerged Pippin III’s usurpation of royal power had not been simply a power-grab or a transition; it had been necessary for the good of the community. The later Merovingians had done nothing to prevent the destabilisation of the community which supposedly had taken place during their

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<sup>4</sup> Wood, ‘Continental Connections’; Story, *Carolingian Connections*.



collective royal tenure. They had been unable to keep their subjects in line, so the community had been fractured by peripheral resistance to Frankish authority and by internal civil wars. Such was the Carolingian version of the Merovingian past, but authors were careful to lay the blame firmly on the *rois fainéants*, not on the Franks or the peripheral peoples – although the latter could be blamed if they continued to refuse Frankish authority – and in their own way, the later Merovingians became part of the exclusive discourse of otherness in which Carolingian authors engaged.<sup>5</sup>

Demonstrating such over-arching discourses existed is crucial for understanding the cultural context in which an author worked, but we must also acknowledge there was never a singular, unified Merovingian or Carolingian vision of or approach to community or otherness. Throughout this study, therefore, we have sought to highlight above all the individual ways in which authors engaged in these discourses. Such engagements show us how authors were influenced by their cultural milieu, but also how they intended to influence that milieu. They wrote about subjects which would resonate with their audiences, whether it be the negotiations over Frankish consensus or the creation of the Carolingian empire, or any of the themes associated with these processes. At the same time, they laid out their interpretations of these processes, whether it was Fredegar explaining the decline of Frankish influence east of the Rhine in terms of poor counsel combined with a child king, the *LHF*-author demonstrating the good done for the community by the Pippinids, or Altfrid showing the importance of the Frisian missionaries for the community.

We have been expansive in the coverage of this study precisely because we have sought to highlight the contributions made to these discourses by both historians and hagiographers. We have not, however, been exhaustive, and there is still more to be said on this subject. Much could be said about other types of sources and what they tell us about contemporary perceptions of community and otherness. For example, we have only touched on law-codes and other legislative texts; such such documents are intrinsically tied to notions of identity, and while they engage with it in a rather different way than do narrative sources, it would be interesting to

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<sup>5</sup> R. Broome, 'Pagans, Rebels and Merovingians: Otherness in the early Carolingian world', in C. Gantner, R. McKitterick and S. Meeder (eds), *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, Forthcoming).

explore the relationship between such texts further, especially in the context of Charlemagne's oaths of loyalty. We might also consider an even longer chronological perspective. For example, while we have dealt with a period in which the Frankish community and its relationship with the wider non-Frankish community was being negotiated, we have left unanswered questions about the origins of this discourse in those of the sixth century and where it went in the later ninth century. In other words, we might consider how and why a focus on the Frankish community replaced the Gallo-Christian focus of Gregory of Tours, and how notions and perceptions of the Frankish community changed after the division of 843 which crystallised in the Eastern and Western Frankish kingdoms. Still, what we hope to have provided with this study is a snapshot of this spectrum of discourses and those who contributed to them.

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