Memorable crises: Carolingian historiography and the making of Pippin’s reign, 750-900

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CHAPTER ONE

‘Hinc Pippine Micas’

Pippin and His Sources

Relatively little is known about the origins of the Carolingian family. In Carolingian historiography, the family’s origins tends to be retraced to the early seventh century, a vision of genealogical continuity that depends heavily on the family’s women.¹ This narrative begins in early seventh-century Austrasia, with the mayor of the palace Pippin I (d. 639/640) and Duke Arnulf (d. 640-647), who later became bishop of Metz and ended up becoming a Carolingian saint. Under the mayoralty of Pippin’s son, Grimoald I (d. 662), the family’s reputation took a beating: Grimoald, accused of having supplanted the legitimate Merovingian king with his own son, Childebert ‘the Adopted’, was arrested and brutally executed.² Fortunately, Pippin had a daughter as well, Begga, who married Arnulf’s son Ansegisel. Little is known of the latter, but they allegedly had son whom they also named Pippin. Admittedly, the identity of Ansegisel as Pippin’s father rests on the testimony of the Lombard Paul the Deacon, who recorded it in the Gesta episcoporum Mettensium (c. 784).³ Pippin II (d. 714) succeeded to the Austrasian mayoralty and, after his victory at the Battle of Tertry (687), to that of Neustria, too. For the first time, as the chronicle known as the Annales Mettenses priores states in celebratory tones, a ‘Carolingian’ governed a united Frankish realm.⁴

Contrary to all expectations, Pippin II was succeeded by Charles Martel, who in some contemporary accounts is discredited as Pippin’s illegitimate son,

³Paul, Gesta, p. 265, lines 4-5.
⁴AMP, s.a. 691: ‘Pippinus singularem Francorum obtinuit principatum.’
born from a union with a concubine named Alphaida. Whatever the legal status of their relation, two things should be emphasized: first, that both Alphaida and Charles were prominent members of the Austrasian elite, and second, that her status as ‘concubine’ may only have meant to reflect that the rights to Pippin’s succession went to the sons of his union with Plectrud. However, they had all died, leaving behind very young sons in whom the Austrasian nobility soon lost faith. Charles, in turn, also had multiple sons of multiple wives, which made his succession in 741 as messy as the one in which he rose to power. Of Charles’s three successors – Carloman (d. 755), Pippin (d. 768) and Grifo (d. 753) – Pippin was the most successful. With one brother having abdicated in 747 and the other living either as a captive or a fugitive since Charles’s death, Pippin was able to claim sole domination over the Frankish territories, for which he claimed the title of king in 751. On his deathbed at St Denis, Pippin was able to pass on uncontestedly his title and possessions to his sons, Charlemagne and Carloman (d. 771).

Though not much is known about Pippin, we do know that his contemporaries did not address him as ‘the Short’. The earliest reference to Pippin’s alleged small stature comes from Notker the Stammerer’s Gesta Karoli Magni, composed between 883 and 887. The context for Notker’s remark is revealing: it follows a heroic episode in which Pippin restored order at his court by stepping into an arena with two ferocious animals, killing both beasts with one mighty hew of his sword. What drove Pippin to his act of bravery was a rumour that ‘the leaders of his army were accustomed in secret to speak contemptuously of him.’ After Notker had Pippin show his nobles that their leader was actually made of the right stuff, Pippin addressed his noblemen with the following words: ‘Have you not heard what little (parvus) David did to the giant Goliath, or what tiny (brevissimus) Alexander did to his nobles?’ From what Notker tells us, Pippin’s nobles had apparently picked on their leader because of his small size. It allowed Notker, however, to make Pippin’s martial prowess seem all the more impressive, and to set up Pippin as an equal to David or Alexander – though neither is known to have been particularly small.

If the origins of Pippin’s dubious epitaph might be traced back to Notker’s late ninth-century account, the epitaph itself came in to use in the literary

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5 Fouracre, Charles Martel, pp. 55-6; Fischer, Karl Martell, pp. 43-9.
context of the high medieval *chansons de geste*. Such epitaphs were needed to be able to distinguish retrospectively between the various leading members of a family that shared a very restricted name pool. It is for this reason that I shall persist in anachronistically using these names – i.e. Pippin ‘the Short’, Charles ‘Martel’, Louis ‘the Pious’ – especially where there is a risk of confusion between the various Charleses and Pippins that ruled Francia during the eighth and ninth centuries.

Pippin’s reign left more traces than merely those that had been drawn up from memory by later Carolingian historians. Although the focus of the present study will be on later Carolingian historiography, it is nonetheless important to emphasize that there also exists a limited body of more contemporary texts, comprising various letters, diplomas and capitularies. Some of these texts contain a highly programmatic content that allows the historian a glimpse of the ideological kitchen of Pippin’s administration, from which it might be deduced that many of the ingredients commonly associated with the reign of Charlemagne, were already present under his predecessor. It shows that the challenge to justify some of the more controversial events of Pippin’s reign was not just felt by later Carolingian historiographers looking back at the complex and at times messy history of the dynasty, but that these challenges were already addressed by Pippin’s own contemporaries – the spin doctors who sought to turn Grifo into a rebellious prince, Carloman into a pious monk and Pippin into a just king.

We must assume, however, that only a tiny fraction of the administrative output of Pippin’s chancery survives. These by themselves do not allow for a detailed reconstruction of Pippin’s reign; for that we have to rely on later historiographical narratives. Nevertheless, the information contained in these documents is a valuable addition. In many cases, the written remnants of Pippin’s own lifetime reveal unique aspects of his reign that we would otherwise not have known. For example, though Charlemagne’s historiographers carefully recorded when and where Pippin’s armies had marched to war, they did not relate the diplomatic activities that preceded these campaigns, for which we need to turn to the letters Pippin received from the papal court. More relevant to the present study, which concentrates on the literary strategies that underlie historiographical narratives, are those instances in which these varied contemporary records can be used either to corroborate or contradict the statements posited in later Carolingian historiography.

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9 Stoclet, ‘Pépin dit “le Bref”’.
10 See below, chapter 1.1.
graphy. It should be stressed, however, that the main purpose for doing so will not be to judge whether such statements are 'true' or 'false', but to establish that historical perceptions were subject to manipulation and, if possible, to determine how this was accomplished.

In this chapter I shall begin by introducing the two letter collections that inform us of specific aspects of Pippin’s reign, namely the Codex epistolaris carolinus and the letter collection of Boniface. I shall then turn to the evidence of the charters, focussing in particular on the significance of a group of charters dedicated to the monastery of St Denis, which was of special importance to Pippin. Section 1.3 introduces the extant capitularies, which contain the acts of the earliest Carolingian reform councils. These texts reveal how Carloman and Pippin wished to organize religion and society – an aspect of their reigns that is hardly visible in the later accounts of Carolingian historiography. In section 1.4 attention will go out to the programmatic prologues of a number of court-associated texts through which royal ideology was expressed. In the final sections of this chapter, I turn to Carolingian historiography. Section 1.5 introduces the genres of the medieval chronicle and the medieval annals, whereas in section 1.6 focusses on the context in which these texts were composed and their intended function in Carolingian elite society.

1.1. Letters

Only one letter has survived that was sent in Pippin’s name, concerning a donation made to the community of Fleury in exchange for their prayers. We have more letters that were sent to Pippin or his court. Many of these came from the papacy, and we owe their preservation to Charlemagne, who in 791 ordered the by then tattered collection of papal epistles to be collected and copied into a single collection to ensure their preservation. This collection, known as the Codex epistolaris carolinus, presently survives in a single manuscript and contains about forty letters addressed to Pippin and/or the Frankish elite. In addition to these, there is one papal letter addressed to Pippin, in response to Pippin’s petition to Pope Zachary (741-752) for advice on certain canonical matters. Together, these letters attest to the formation of the bond between the Carolingian dynasty, starting with Pippin, and the papacy.

11 EM, no. 19.  
12 CC, prologue.  
14 CC, no. 3.
As these letters reveal, after Pippin and Pope Stephen II had made their pact in the winter of 753/4, Rome had initially been concerned that Pippin was unwilling or unable to live up to his promise to restore and protect the patrimony of Saint Peter.\(^{15}\) When Pippin finally did come to the aid of the Romans, praise was lavished upon him, and he was hailed as a new David.\(^{16}\) Following the death of the Lombard king Aistulf in 756, his successor, Desiderius (r. 756-774), was installed with the consent of the Frankish king and the Roman pope. However, Desiderius soon turned out to be as much a threat to Rome as his predecessor had been. Again, a flurry of letters was sent to the Frankish court, and again Pippin was implored to live up to his promise.\(^{17}\) By then, it would seem, he must have begun to regret having made it.

The Lombard threat to Rome is an ever-present theme in the letters sent to Pippin by Stephen's brother and successor, Pope Paul I (757-767), and the political situation in Italy grew even more complex when the Byzantines began to get actively involved. At the same time, though, these letters also testify to the growing bond between the Carolingian family and the bishops of Rome. For example, when in 761 Pippin entered into a relation of co-paternity with Pope Paul I over his daughter Gisela.\(^ {18}\) These letters are not just an invaluable source for the early involvement of the Carolingians in Italy, but of mid-eighth-century Italian politics in general and the formation of the papal state.\(^ {19}\) They open our eyes to the complexities of eighth-century politics, which, contrary to the image derived from Carolingian annals and chronicles, did not revolve exclusively around warfare, but may actually have perceived diplomacy as the chief means of conflict resolution. From 753 to long after Pippin's death, numerous legates, missi and ambassadors, often headed by powerful Frankish officials or even the lesser members of the dynasty, crossed the Alps to promote the interests of the dynasty. Had it not been for Charlemagne's zeal to preserve these letters for posterity, we would have known very little about this vital aspect of eighth-century Carolingian politics.

A second letter collection survives containing the letters of the missionary archbishop and papal legate Boniface (d. 754), whose base of operations was located on the eastern fringes of the Frankish world. The collection is a contemporary one, and was probably compiled in Mainz in the 760s, on the instruction of Bishop Lull (d. 786), Boniface’s successor.\(^ {20}\) These letters mostly

\(^{15}\) CC, nos. 5-10.
\(^{16}\) CC, nos. 11-13; compare with ARF, s.a. 756; Continuations, c. 39.
\(^{17}\) CC, nos. 15-22.
\(^{19}\) Noble, Republic, 75.
inform us of Boniface’s mission east of the Rhine and his attempt to correct what he considered to be the derelict state of the Frankish Church and its wanton clergy. It was on Carloman’s instruction that Boniface presided over the first two Carolingian councils, and Boniface’s own testimony allows us to identify him as the main architect of the early programme of Carolingian correctio.

Admittedly, most of Boniface’s letters tell us very little of Pippin’s reign; there can be no doubt that Boniface was above all Carloman’s man. Once the latter abdicated in 747, Boniface retired to his see in Mainz and his monastery at Fulda. In his old age Boniface stopped being the driving force behind church reform, possibly because there was no room anymore for an aged Anglo-Saxon critic at Pippin’s court. Instead, new men took over, most notably Bishop Chrodegang of Metz (d. 766). On two occasions, however, Boniface sought Pippin’s by then royal ear: in one letter, he requested the king’s permission to attend a synod, which suggests that his presence at these assemblies was no longer self-evident. The second letter is not even directed to Pippin personally, but to archchaplain Fulrad, whom Boniface asked to act as an intermediary. Feeling death approaching, Boniface asked for Pippin’s permission to allow Lull to succeed him in Mainz, and to have the king’s insurance that the communities living on the Saxon frontier would continue to be maintained in Boniface’s absence.

1.2. Royal diplomas

Jacques Le Goff, in his monumental biography of Louis IX (r. 1214-1270), remarked that ‘Saint Louis’s person expressed itself through his administrative activity. He existed through it and it is at least in part thanks to it that he continues to exist for us.’ The extant diplomas of Saint Louis number in the thousands. Pippin’s extant diplomas, on the other hand, amount to only thirty-eight, of which only a handful are original documents. In addition to these, we have references to another thirty-odd lost diplomas (deperdita), and there may

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22 De Jong, ‘Bonifatius’, 11-13. Boniface was active in Carloman’s territories.
25 Letters of Boniface, nos. 93 and 107.
26 Le Goff, Saint Louis, p. 243.
27 For Pippin’s mayoral charters, see Heidrich, Urkunden; for Pippin’s royal charters, see DKar. 1, nos. 1-42.
have been many more. But even when we compare this number to the c. 250 extant diplomas signed by Charlemagne, Pippin’s diplomas remain a modest corpus that might help to illuminate, but will not make manifest, ‘Pippin’s person’.

Harry Bresslau defined charters as ‘written declarations meant to serve as evidence of actions of a legal kind, recorded in specific forms, which are, however, changing according to the various persons, times, places and topics concerned.’ 28 Yet the function and meaning of a charter is not limited to it being a transcript of a legal transaction, especially in the case of the royal charter, or diploma. Recent developments in Urkundenforschung and the study of legal texts have shown that these documents must not merely be understood as the descriptive or normative records of an early medieval bureaucracy, but as performative texts, to be used as a political instrument through which a ruler was able to promote his authority – something we should consider for all extant texts of the period. 29 This becomes especially clear if we look beyond the text of the diploma and consider the object, its context and its audiences: from the formal petitio, to a diploma’s public authentication at the court and its local preservation by the beneficiary and its community. More than a legal report alone, the diploma is a lasting symbol of royal authority in general, and a symbol of the ruler’s relation to the beneficiary in particular. 30

When viewed from this perspective, Pippin’s diplomas, rare as they may be, still tell us much about his reign. Take for example the diplomas issued to the monastery of St Denis, a beneficiary that is particularly well represented among Pippin’s extant diplomas, making up almost half of the collection. Such statistics are easily misleading: they may say more about the monastery’s exceptional archival strategy (or the archive’s exceptional fortune), than about Pippin’s policy. In this case, however, there are various other indications that Pippin had a special bond with this Neustrian monastery. St Denis was where he spent part of his childhood in the 720s, where he and his sons were anointed by Pope Stephen II in the summer of 754 and where he was buried in September 768. It was also the site where his father and several Merovingian kings had chosen to be buried, making the monastery an important symbol of Frankish royal power. St Denis was probably not unique in the attention it received from the early Carolingians – its charters are merely uniquely

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29 Koziol, Politics of Memory, pp. 3-5. A similar approach has been advocated for other genres of legal and/or administrative text. See Pössel, ‘Capitularies’, 253.
30 Heidecker (ed.), Charters; Koziol, Politics of Memory; esp. chapter one; on the symbolic significance of the dates on which diplomas were issued: Stoët, ‘Dies Unctionis’; Heidrich, ‘Synode und Hoftag’, 440.
preserved –, but there can be little doubt that this particular monastery enjoyed a privileged status in the eyes of Pippin and his contemporaries.

If studied together, the diplomas of St Denis form a unique set of documents of which the earliest were issued only months before Pippin was elevated to the kingship and the last were issued from his deathbed, in order to secure his memoria. None of these charters can be explicitly linked to Pippin’s bid for the throne in 751. Nevertheless, they do testify to the political manoeuvring that was necessary to accumulate the support Pippin would have needed to claim, and afterwards consolidate, the royal title.31

The first of these diplomas was issued in August 750 and describes the proceedings of a legal dispute between the monastery of St Denis, represented by an advocatus named Chrodgarius, and a certain lady Christiana.32 Their dispute had been brought before the court at Verneuil, over which Pippin presided as mayor of the palace. The subject of their dispute was the Villa Mariolo, which both parties claimed as their own. However, Chrodgarius had not come to court empty-handed. He presented a charter to be reread by Pippin and his officials, which stated that its previous owner had donated the estate and its belongings to the monastery of St Denis. Pippin confirmed the charter’s authenticity and had Christiana publically do the same, thereby deciding the matter in favour of the monastery. In the period 750-754, five more such diplomas were issued, almost on a yearly basis, each dealing with property disputes and each having Pippin rule in favour of St Denis.33 Unique in this context is a diploma issued in 751, on the eve of Pippin’s coup, which confirmed all of St Denis’s property claims after an inquiry had been made by a pair of Pippin’s missi at the request of Abbot Fulrad.34 The Alemannian annals refer to this event in their entry for 751, where it states: ‘Pippin was made king; the property of the churches was described and divided.’35 It might not have been a coincidence that Abbot Fulrad was promoted to the position of archchaplain at Pippin’s new court; Fulrad had found a powerful and loyal patron in Pippin around the time of his royal inauguration and Pippin a loyal and influential subject in the abbot of St Denis.36

31 Most narrative sources are silent about the events surrounding Pippin’s coup of 751, mentioning only the event itself.
32 Heidrich, *Urkunden*, no. 18.
33 It should be noted that there may have been additional disputes involving St Denis in which Pippin ruled in favour of the other party. If so, the resulting diplomas are less likely to have survived in the archives of St Denis and may have been lost.
34 Heidrich, no. 23.
36 Heidrich, *Urkunden*, nos. 21-23; *DKar.*, 1, nos. 6 and 7.
After Pippin’s royal confirmation in St Denis, in 754, his interest in the monastery appears to have abated somewhat. In 755 he donated confiscated property to the monastery.\(^{37}\) In 759, an old dispute between the monastery and the count of Paris, concerning the right to collect the annual market tolls, was put before the king and settled in favour of the monks.\(^{38}\) Seven years later, in 766, Pippin issued two diplomas to the monks, a donation and a confirmation of that donation, for which he requested that they commemorate his late brother Carloman in their prayers.\(^{39}\) Last, in 768, the year in which Pippin got ill and died, he issued a final cluster of diplomas, in which Pippin confirmed the monastery’s privileges and donated property to its abbot, Fulrad, who was also Pippin’s archchaplain. He also donated property to the community as compensation for his burial in the basilica and to motivate the monks to pray for his soul’s salvation.\(^{40}\) These diplomas reveal the amount of energy and cost that went into maintaining the bonds of patronage on which Carolingian authority ultimately rested. The community of St Denis was but one actor in a sizeable network consisting of the secular and religious elite.

The other half of Pippin’s extant charters had been issued to various monasteries and churches across the Frankish realm. Apart from St Denis, the Alsatian monastery of Honau and the Austrasian monastery of Prüm stand out. Honau managed to preserve four of Pippin’s diplomas, Prüm managed to preserve five. Prüm, as these diplomas make clear, was of special significance to Pippin and in particular to his wife Bertrada, whose grandmother had founded the monastery in 721. Other ecclesiastical institutions are represented by one or occasionally two charters. In most cases, they record how Pippin either granted or confirmed the privileges and possessions of these communities. They reveal a strategy that goes back to the policy of Pippin II, which enabled Pippinid/Carolingian leaders to sustain and expand their authority, wealth and influence by controlling monastic resources in exchange for protection and privileges, and which Josef Semmler has called *karolingische Klosterpolitik*.\(^{41}\) What these charters also reveal is that the dynastic transition of 751 did not lead to any significant stylistic or formulaic changes in Merovingian and Carolingian diplomas. If anything, and as might perhaps be expected of a new

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\(^{37}\) DKar. 1, no. 8.

\(^{38}\) Ibid. no. 12. Also see DKar-I, no. 6.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., nos 22 and 23.


\(^{41}\) Semmler, ‘Klosterpolitik’. The phrase was originally coined by Ewig, ‘Klosterpolitik’, to describe the politics of Queen Balthild (d. >680). On the accumulation of spiritual capital by the Frankish elite in the seventh and eighth centuries: Fouracre, ‘Cult of saints’, 143-65; Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space*, pp. 99-114. See also Fouracre, ‘Regulating’, on the political use of sanctity by the early Carolingians.
king bent on consolidating his position, Pippin’s diplomas became more conservative – more distinctly royal – after 751. While Carolingian kingship brought with it a series of changes with regard to the organization of the court, royal diplomas, whose primary function it was to record and preserve the legal agreements between individuals and institutions, depended on continuity, especially in politically turbulent times.

1.3. Capitularies

Unique to Carloman’s and Pippin’s joint mayoral rule were the capitularies they issued. The Carolingian capitularies were subtly different from the conciliar proceedings that survived from the Merovingian period, which had been drafted up by the attending bishops of a council or synod and were afterwards presented to the king for his formal consent. In the Carolingian capitolary, it was the Carolingian mayor (and, after 751, the king) who occupied the limelight and is presented as being directly involved with the conciliar proceedings and the promulgation of its outcome as law. The ecclesiastical and secular elites played an important role in this process, but operated in the background by providing the ruler with advice and consent.²² Carloman and Pippin were thus placing themselves prominently at the foreground of church correctio, as the protectors of orthodoxy in a Constantinian fashion.²³

These texts’ function and legal character have been a subject of debate among historians. In 1961, François-Louis Ganshof defined capitularies as ‘expressions of governmental power, arranged in articles (capitula), which several Carolingian rulers used as a means to implement their laws and governmental policies.’²⁴ This is now considered too narrow a definition. More recently, Christina Pössel focused on the communicative aspects of these texts, defining them as ‘decrees, collections of chapters on a wide range of legal, administrative or pastoral topics, which were to be sent out from the centre into the regions of the Carolingian empire.’²⁵ It can be questioned to what extent the Carolingian leadership could enforce the decrees it promulgated. Instead of perceiving such texts as legal prescriptions, capitularies can perhaps

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²³ Ewig, ‘Bild Constantins’, esp. pp. 18-29; The earliest reference to Constantine as a model for a Frankish king is found in Gregory of Tours, Histories book II, c. 31, p. 77. Such references are rare in Carolingian literature. See: Staubach, ‘Karolingische Reform’, 570-71, n. 83. However, note that Gregory’s comparison was copied into the Liber historiae Francorum, and that both texts circulated profusely in the Carolingian period.
²⁴ Ganshof, Kapitularien, p. 13. For an overview of the debate, see Mordek, ‘Kapitularien’, 25-9. Also see: McKitterick, Written Word, pp. 27-33; McKitrick, Politics, 41.
also be seen as performative documents – statements of intent and identity – much like the diplomas discussed above. Given the diversity within this genre, Pössel proposed that ‘instead of defining capitularies as legislation (...) we should see as the lowest common denominator of all texts found in capitulary collections the royal sponsorship of a text, specifically of its publication and dissemination.’

The initiative to reform, or, more aptly put, to correct the organization of the Frankish Church and the conduct of its officials came from Boniface. With few allies among the indigenous clergy, Boniface’s allegiance was foremost to Rome, in whose service he acted as legate for the province of Germania. Having crossed the Channel in 716, Boniface found a willing, if perhaps not overeager, patron in Charles Martel. However, Boniface’s potential was recognized by the Bavarian duke Odilo, a close ally of Charles, who invited the missionary to reorganize the Bavarian Church in 739 and to convene a synod there. These activities may in turn have inspired Carloman, who had succeeded Charles in 741, to summon Boniface to do the same in his territory. In a letter to Pope Zachary, Boniface could report that '[Carloman] promised that he would do something toward reforming and re-establishing the ecclesiastical discipline, which for a long time, not less than sixty or seventy years, has been despoiled and trampled upon.' Even though Boniface’s portrait of the dilapidated state of the Frankish Church was somewhat exaggerated, his Carolingian patrons nonetheless acted upon its urgency and stated in the prologues of their first capitularies that it was their intention ‘to restore the law of God and the ecclesiastical cult, which in the days of former rulers has fallen into ruin.’

Carolingian mayoral support for these ‘Bonifacian reforms’ should not be dismissed as mere political opportunism. The importance of a properly maintained divine cult, or religio ecclesiastica, was of central importance in Carolingian society. But while Carloman and Pippin will have carried out their self-appointed guardianship of the divine cult with the utmost conviction, they cannot have been blind to the moral legitimacy it bestowed on their positions

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46 Ibid., 267.
47 On the concept of medieval church reform: Reuter, ‘Kirchenreform’. Wood, Missionary Life, pp. 58–60 argues that Boniface was more a church reformer than a missionary.
48 Ewig, ‘Milo’.
49 Letters of Boniface, no. 45; Willibald, Life of Boniface, pp. 36–41.
50 Letters of Boniface, no. 50.
51 Concilium Germanicum (742), prologue: ‘lex Dei et ecclesiastica relegio recuperetur, quae in diebus praeteritorum principum dissipata corruptur.’ See also: Council of Soissons (744), c. 1: ‘quomodo lex Dei et ecclesiastica regula recuperetur, quae in diebus priorum principum dissipata corruptur.’
as de-facto leaders of the Franks. For the first time in Frankish history, councils convened and capitularies were issued on the authority of mayors of the palace instead of kings. Their impact notwithstanding, the promulgation of these decrees in their own names says much about Carolingian authority at this time. Also, their involvement with and proximity to the church and its personnel allowed them to restructure church hierarchy and, more importantly, it granted them access to the vast landed resources they needed to keep the Carolingian war machine at full steam.

In the 740s, the mayoral phase of Pippin’s reign, there is evidence for at least five Frankish councils or synods, though there may have been more. At the so-called Concilium Germanicum of 742 it was decreed that a synod would be held on a yearly basis.\(^{52}\) This would later be extended to two synods a year, one in March and the other in October.\(^{53}\) Of these five mayoral synods, only the capitularies of the first three have survived.\(^{54}\) The first of these, the Concilium Germanicum, had a strong provincial character and was probably not attended by Carloman personally.\(^{55}\) The outcome, which Carloman later confirmed with a capitulary, would nevertheless form the blueprint for the Carolingian reform programme. It dealt with issues of church organization, the struggle against paganism and above all clerical conduct. The decrees formulated at the Concilium Germanicum were ratified the next year, at the Council at Les Estinnes (743), at which representatives from the whole of Carloman’s realm were present. In addition to this, its capitulary also contained a chapter that allowed Carloman to redistribute church land to his armed retainers in precaria, in return for a modest annual compensation of one solidus per farm and on the condition that the affected ecclesiastical houses remain capable of performing their sacred duties. In theory, the ecclesiastical institutions retained ownership of the land, but in practice Carloman had gained access to the immense landed reserves of the church, which he claimed he needed because


\(^{53}\) Concilium Germanicum (742), c. 1; Councilium Suessionense (744), c. 2. Cf. Hincmar, *De Ordine Palatii*, cc. 29-30. Hincmar noted that he based his work on an earlier work by Adalhard (d. 826), a contemporary and relative of Pippin and Charlemagne.

\(^{54}\) The capitularies of the Concilium Germanicum (742) and the Council of Les Estinnes (743) survive exclusively in the letter collection of Boniface. The capitulary of the Council of Soissons (744) survives in the canonical law collections of the ninth century. For manuscripts, see: Mordek, *Bibliotheca capitularium*. The different transmission context of these capitularies and the differences in language support the idea that Boniface was not directly involved with the Council of Soissons.

of the looming wars and persecutions of the various peoples (*gentium*) that surround us.\(^{56}\)

In 744 Pippin organized his own council at Soissons, joining his older brother in the spirit of *correctio*. Pippin and his clergy, however, were concerned about the moral conduct of not just the clergy, but of the laity as well, focussing especially on matters of adultery and incest.\(^{57}\) Owing to the letters of Boniface, we have evidence for at least two more councils that convened in 745 and 747.\(^{58}\) The first of these was a joint council and in 747 two separate councils may have convened: one by Carloman in Düren and the other by Pippin, who for the occasion had requested Pope Zachary to send him canons on various topics.\(^{59}\) As king, Pippin issued a set of edicts that addressed a number of topics, ranging from the collection of tolls, to the measurement of coins, to the Frankish justice system.\(^{60}\) The Council of Compiègne of 757, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the regulations of marriage and divorce. Whether or not these were actually implemented during Pippin’s realm – and the language of these texts certainly suggests that this was the plan – or whether these decrees should merely be understood as statements of intent, they nonetheless offer a wealth of information with regard to the moral code and social values of Pippin’s polity.

### 1.4. Baddilo’s pen and the return of Clovis

In addition to letters and administrative texts, Pippin’s royal chancery also produced three highly programmatic prologues that express the core values of Pippin’s royal ideology. The first of these is the prologue to the capitulary of the Council of Ver, issued on 11 July 755.\(^{61}\) Its content is very similar to that of the prologues of the capitularies issued in the 740s, though perhaps more outspoken and royal in tone. It opens by invoking that same foreboding sense of urgency we have seen in Boniface’s letters and the early capitularies. These had been ‘restless times’ (*tempora inquieta*), which had led to a general ‘neglect’ (*neglecentia*) of the ‘rules of the ancient fathers’ (*priscorum patrum regulae*) and ‘the most orthodox norms of the holy Catholic Church’ (*sanctae aecclesiae*).

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\(^{56}\) *Council of Les Estinnes* (743), c.2: ‘Propter imminentia bella et persecutiones ceterarum gentium quae in circuitu nostro sint.’

\(^{57}\) *Council of Soissons* (744): [on heresy:] cc. 1 (Nicene Creed), 2 and 7; [on lay conduct:] cc. 4 and 9.

\(^{58}\) *Letters of Boniface*, nos. 60-1. Letter no. 79 may allude to a possible third council, but this can also be interpreted as a reference to the council of 747.

\(^{59}\) *Ibid.*, no. 77. Pope Zachary’s reply to Pippin’s petition survives as *CC*, no. 3.

\(^{60}\) *Pippini regis capitulare* (754-755) and *Council of Ver* (755).

\(^{61}\) *Council of Ver* (755), prologue.
PIPPIN AND HIS SOURCES

catholicae rectissimae normae). Of course, it was Pippin’s intention to turn the tide and establish ‘peaceful and calm times’ (tempora serena spatiaque tranquilla) in his kingdom, which meant restoring canon law, ‘undistorted and inviolable’ (inconvulsa atque inviolata).

The second prologue is actually an arenga to an exceptional charter that Pippin issued for the monastery of Prüm on 13 August 762.62 As noted, this monastery was of special interest to Pippin and his wife, who enriched it with many lands and privileges and effectively refounded it.63 The circumstances leading up to this unusual charter, which is something between a royal diploma and private charter, was Pippin’s recent capture of the city of Bourges on the Aquitanians.64 The diploma’s unusually long arenga begins with a clear definition of how Pippin perceived his royal mission:

And since it is clear to us that Divine Providence has anointed [us] to the throne of the kingdom, it is right to exercise these things in God’s name, in so far as we may be able to follow the grace and will of the Highest. For we have remembered that Gospel, in which it said: “He that does the will of My Father, who is in heaven, shall himself enter into the heavenly kingdom” [Matt. 7:21]. And since kings reign because of God and He in his mercy has entrusted to us nations and realms to be governed and looked after, so that we may be exalted rulers (rectores) for the poor and needy, let us not fail to govern and educate [them] for the love of Christ.65

The diploma is authenticated by Baddilo, chief notary at Pippin’s court. Baddilo’s subscription furthermore features in diplomas issued in the period 757-766.66 Although the Capitulary of Ver is an anonymous document issued in

63 Prüm had been founded in 721 by Bertrada, the grandmother of Queen Bertrada, wife of Pippin the Short. Heinrich, Urkundenbuch, no. 8; Nolden (ed.), Goldene Buch, fol. 82a-83a. The foundation charter was not part of the original ninth-century Carolingian cartulary, but was added in the twelfth century. Prüm’s continuity in the period 721-762 is subject to debate. See: Isphording, Prüm, pp. 60-3. Discontinuity is a possibility, but the charter’s re-emergence in the twelfth-century reworking of the cartulary suggests that it was intentionally left out in the ninth-century composition, possibly to promote the site’s identity as a royal Carolingian monastery.
64 Continuations, c. 43.
66 Ibid., nos 9, 10, 16 and 21-23. Baddilo replaced by another scribe (subscribing ‘in vice Baddilonis’): nos. 13 and 18.
755, its exceptional prologue might suggest that Baddilo may have been involved here as well. This is also the case for the prologue attached to a reworking of the *Lex Salica*, which Pipin reissued in 763/4 (the so-called D-recension).67 Whether Baddilo or one of his co-notaries had composed these programmatic texts (three or four notaries appear to have been active at this time), it is clear that these notaries were charged with more than merely documenting legal transactions: they were promoting Pipin's royal identity and articulating his royal ideology.

As important as the actual content of the *Lex Salica* was the royal act of promulgating it. It is not at all clear how these ethnic law codes actually functioned in early medieval societies, but it has been suspected that their function was geared more towards identity formation, than as an applicable set of legal statutes.68 The original date of composition is unknown, but certain elements of the *Lex Salica* almost certainly predate the reign of Clovis (c. 466–511).69 As the eighth-century prologue shows, a Frankish audience associated the text with the origins of their people and its earliest kings, who are credited with having promulgated the *Lex Salica*, no doubt to express their royal task as lawgivers and keepers of the peace.70

The extended prologue of 763/4 begins with a eulogy of the Frankish people, praising for their strength in war, love for peace, wisdom in counsel and overall nobility. In particular, the Franks are praised for their conversion to Catholicism, which left them 'immune from heresy' (*emunis ab heresa*).71 The prologue then reuses a section from the older prologue, recounting the mythological origins of the text, namely that it was created by the four lawmakers Wisogast, Bodogast, Salegast and Widogast – whose names eerily resemble the places these men are said to have come from. Especially telling is the homage to Clovis that the Reviser added: 'favoured by God, Clovis, king of the Franks, fierce and beautiful and glorious, was the first who received the Catholic baptism, and that which was considered less appropriate in the pact, was removed and corrected by Clovis, Childbert and Chlotharius by royal

69 Ubl, ‘Loi salique’.
70 *Pactus Legis Salica*, short prologue, c. 1, p. 2.
71 See in this context: Innes, ‘Heresy’.
force. The prologue then concludes with an invocation of Christ in order to protect the Franks, who

have cast from their necks the heavy yoke of the Romans by fighting, and after their acknowledgement of the baptism, the Franks have decorated the [rediscovered] bodies of the holy martyrs with gold and precious stones, which the Romans burned with fire or maimed with iron or threw before beasts to be tormented.

No longer merely Rome's successors, Pippin's Franks had superseded them in both warfare and faith.

The act of reissuing the *Lex Salica* and equipping it with an ideologically charged prologue was not only meant to stimulate a sense of collective Frankish identity after a long period of internal division, but may also have served to present Pippin as a new Clovis. Pippin and his circle flirted with the idea that they were reviving a heroic chapter in the Frankish past – a chapter vividly recalled in the work of Gregory of Tours and subsequently copied into a host of other chronicles and historiographical compilations. The parallels between their two reigns were there for all to see: Pippin's holy unction mirrored the baptism of Clovis, both rulers founded a royal line, and both were exceptional conquerors. It might have been no coincidence that Pippin had his prologue composed in the heat of his epic conquest of Aquitaine, just as Clovis before him had conquered it from the Visigoths. A further argument indicating that the Franks were not blind to these similarities dates to c. 827, when an Alemannian monk named Erchanbert composed a short history of the Franks, in which he juxtaposed the reigns of Clovis and Pippin. By then, however, Pippin's royal triumph had already become yesterday's news: with the advent of empire, the Franks no longer anticipated a second Clovis, but looked for a new Constantine.

72 *Pactus Lex Salica*, 2, prologue: ‘Deo favendi rex Francorum Chlodovius, torrens et pulcher [et inclitus], primus recepit catholicum baptismum, et quod minus in pactum habebatur idoneum, per perculsus regis Chlodvio et Childeberto et Clotario fuit lucidis emendatum.’

73 *Pactus Lex Salica*, 2, prologue: ‘Romanorum iugum durissimum de suis cervicibus excusserunt pugnando, atque post agnicionem baptismi sanctorum martyrum corpora, quem Romani iigne cremaverunt vel ferro truncaverunt vel besteis lacerando proiecerunt, Franci [reperta] super eos aurum et lapides preciosos ornauerunt.’

74 Contreni, ‘Reading Gregory’, 422-5. As will be discussed in chapter 2, Gregory’s *Histories* were an important source for later compilers, and came to be connected to such texts as the *Continuations* and the *Liber historiae Francorum*.


76 Erchanbert, *Breviarium*. On this text, see below, chapter 5.2.4, pp. 180-5, and appendix three.
1.5. Annals and chronicles

Central to this study are the annals and chronicles in which a later generation of Franks recorded the history of the Carolingian dynasty. This was not a process of passive recording of the past, but of actively justifying it and of occasionally assigning the past new meaning. In the next chapter, I will study the contexts in which the Continuations and the ARF, the two key historiographical accounts for Pippin’s reign, were written and circulated. But even though both texts were composed in a similar environment, namely by members of the Carolingian court community, they nonetheless belonged to different genres. Medieval annals, which should not be confused with the more elaborate and literary classical annals as composed by Tacitus, and chronicles looked to the past from different angles and used different structuring principles, which had implications for their meaning. At the same time, though, such typological distinctions should not be applied too strictly, as they are essentially modern constructs. And even if annals and chronicles were registered as fundamentally different categories originally, the medieval historiographer may have felt no inhibition about composing hybrid texts. The difficulty for modern scholars to define and maintain solid typological classifications is in itself evidence for the liberty early medieval historiographers had in shaping their histories, which left them ample room for modification, adaptation and ‘hybridisation’. 77

Medieval annals are essentially no more than collections of annual entries, chronologically organized and dated in relation to the Incarnation of Christ. In terms of function and organization, they have much in common with the classical chronicle, which only stimulated their hybridization. The medieval chronicle took its inspiration from Eusebius-Jerome’s Chronicle, a text which it, in one form or another, often meant to continue. 78 Bishop Isidore of Seville (d. 636), himself the author of several larger and lesser chronicles, was not yet familiar with the annalistic genre as we recognize it today, which came to be introduced on the Continent in the 740s. Isidore instead used the word annales as the Latin translation of the Greek chronicle (χρονικά). As Isidore defined the genre in his Etymologies, ‘whatever domestic or military matters on sea or land, worthy of memory are treated year by year in records they are called “annals” from yearly (anniversaries) deeds.’ 79 Moreover, annals were not to be confused...
with histories, as ‘annals (annales) are the actions of individual years (annus) (...), but history (historia) concerns itself with many years or ages.’ For Isidore, the main distinction between the chronicle and the history was their temporal horizon. Writing a century earlier, Cassiodorus also distinguished between the chronicle and the history, but did so in terms of style and function, arguing that the chronicle was the chronological and descriptive work of the historiographer, whereas the history was a more literary genre, that actually reflected on past events.

Responsible for the introduction of the medieval annalistic genre on the Continent in the mid-eighth-century were the Anglo-Saxon missionaries. As these missionaries came to enjoy the support of the Frankish regime, and as their monastic foundations became important cultural centres firmly embedded in the Frankish royal infrastructure, the success of the annalistic genre grew, though they never completely replaced the chronicle as a historiographical genre. Their success was particularly stimulated by their close association with chronology and time reckoning, or computus, for which the Frankish learned elite showed a particularly strong interest around the turn of the century. The implications of this relation for the origins and evolution of the annalistic genre are subject to debate. The traditional view, which holds that annals evolved from being mere notes in the margins of expired Easter Tables, to more emancipated minor annals, to elaborate major annals, such as the ARF, has been judged by McKitterick as being too simplistic and too linear, arguing instead for a more diversified and parallel process of annalistic development in return.

In terms of form and structure, medieval annals offer a radical alternative to the more conventional chronicle. Both genres adhere to a strict chronological

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80 Ibid.: ‘Annales sunt res singulorum annorum. (...) Historia autem multorum annorum vel temporum est.’
82 Ganshof, ‘Historiographie’, 667-8; Story, ‘Frankish annals’, 105-6. Many of the earliest examples of annalistic writing on the Continent note the deaths of Anglo-Saxon or Irish clergymen. E.g. Annales Laureshamenses, s.a. 704-708, p. 22.
84 For the traditional view, see: McCormick, Annales. This view has been criticized by McKitterick, History and Memory, pp. 98-99. While McCormick argues for a linear development from a single source (the Easter table), McKitterick argues for parallel developments, with multiple sources of inspiration. Also key in this debate is the relation between the ‘minor’ and ‘major’ annals. The traditional German view, articulated in Kurze, Karolingischen Annalen, argues that the ARF was based on (older) minor annals. Cf. Halphen, Études critiques, pp. 3-15, argues for the opposite, namely that minor annals derived from the ARF. McKitterick, History and Memory, p. 102, follows Halphen in this matter. McKitterick also warns that the (modern) designations ‘minor’ and ‘major’ in relation to annals should not be interpreted as value judgments. These names merely reflect the average length of the annal entries.
ordering of their information. However, chronicles are structured on the basis of literary and syntactical principles, using conjunctions to connect the various events, whereas the annals are structured on the basis of a numerical list of year numbers, purposefully calibrated to the year of the Incarnation of Christ.85 One significant consequence of this is that the chronicle is better suited to create an account that a reader would recognize as a narrative. Annals, however, often lacked these syntactical connectors, with an incoherent story as a result. Especially in the case of the so-called minor annals – called so because of their very short and succinct year entries – coherence is derived almost exclusively from the numerical sequence of year numbers.86

In a historiographical context, dating according to the *Annus Domini* was nothing less than revolutionary. It ensured a loose cohesion between individual entries, which could therefore be written in an extremely contracted style requiring very little space on the parchment, which would otherwise have reduced the text to a meaningless series of seemingly unrelated statements.87 In addition to this, the *AD* dating scheme embedded the annals’ contents in a broader, but very specific, historical framework, namely that of the history of salvation. If anything, this had the practical advantage of not having to replicate such a framework each time a new set of annals was created, as was the case with the universal chronicle that often applied a variety of dating techniques to keep track of time.88 Because annals used a dating system that was specifically linked to the Incarnation of Christ, a reference point central to contemporary perceptions of historical and liturgical time, and because the passing of time was restricted to a numerical sequence, annals could begin at any desired point in time. The numerical reference to a specific year thus made it instantly clear when the corresponding event had occurred, allowing for a more contemporary focus.

The application of the *AD* system also affected the interpretation of the content of annals. The events related in these texts were directly connected to the life of Christ – the Word made Flesh – and therefore to the history of salvation itself. It made annals yet another expression of how ‘human history is

85 McKitterick, *History and Memory*, pp. 90-5; McKitterick, *Perceptions*, p. 68; Declercq, ‘Dionysius Exigus’, 165-246; Corradini, ‘Rhetoric of crisis’, 303. An oddity are the Carolingian capitularies of the 740s, which also use the *AD*-system: *Concilium Germanicum* (742), prologue; *Council of Soissons* (744), prologue. Note that chronicles occasionally do break chronology (e.g. *Continuatonis*, c. 17; some regard this as the starting point of a new section).

86 Dutton, *Charlemagne’s Mustache*, p. 110


understood as part of divine history.’ This same eschatological dimension was already present in the conventional chronicle and the structure of both genres was, in theory, designed to be continued until the end of time. Isidore of Seville, for example, was well aware of this eschatological outlook of annales (i.e. chronicles), stating that ‘there is this difference between history and annals, namely, that history is of those times that we have seen, but annals are of those years that our age has not known.’

Due to their direct relation to the Incarnation of Christ, this eschatological dimension is much more pronounced in medieval annals, which might explain why their production increased in the years leading up to 800, when according to some Christ would return. Instead of providing an account of the whole of Creation, annals, as it were, pick up where the Bible left off; they were a record of what Augustine had labeled the Sixth Age, i.e. the period between the First and Second Coming of Christ. This close link between contemporary history and the history of salvation has led to the very plausible assumption that authors of annals (minor annals in particular) did not seek to record the deeds of men, but to register the signs of God’s work in the world, as revealed through miracles, the deaths of holy men, extraordinary natural phenomena and the movements of kings – the latter being understood as someone to whom God had entrusted the governance of His people. It fell to the authors of these histories ‘to interpret the works of God and His signs correctly, so that kings might be well-informed rulers.’ If so, annals and biblical exegesis, as Mayke de Jong has argued, may have been more closely related genres than we tend to think.

If indeed annals were originally designed as histories of the divine, and the actions of kings were considered a key expression of divine will, it would not have been long before these same kings and their learned entourage came to realize the vast sacral potential of this historiographical format. After all, if a Carolingian ruler was recognized as a divine instrument, his actions would be justified. If annals interpreted Carolingian authority as divinely sanctified,
they were by definition intolerant of political opposition, as opposition to Carolingian authority would amount to opposition against divine authority itself. A final advantage, from a Carolingian perspective, to use annals as a historiographical format to recount Carolingian history, was that they allowed for an isolated narrative that could begin at any given moment in time, without breaking the link between the events described and the authoritative and sacred history of the Bible. The possibility of a contemporary starting point in combination with a strongly Carolingian focus thus allowed the new dynasty to embed its own past in an authoritative Christian framework that allowed them to pass over their Merovingian predecessors in silence.

Although a direct relation between the success of the annals and the advent of the Carolingian dynasty is difficult to prove, their synchronicity can hardly be considered a coincidence. The Carolingians feature very prominently in these texts and most Frankish annals start with an entry relating specifically to an event that was of special significance to dynastic history. Although annals originated in a monastic, contemplative context, its potential as a historiographical format with which to commemorate and promote the deeds of kings was quickly realized. For this purpose, however, the contracted style of minor annals, often considered to represent an early phase in the evolution of the genre, was poorly suited. Keeping many of the original characteristics, some annals came to be designed to commemorate the deeds of kings, while others continued to monitor the deeds of God. The former group contracted an increasingly rich prose, adopting moralizing features normally associated with the genre of the history and, to a lesser extent, the chronicle. It is on account of these differences that this type of annals is commonly referred to as ‘major annals’, of which the ARF are a prime example.

This type of historiography was foremost a court-oriented affair. Ardo, abbot of St Mihiel (809-819) wrote that ‘no learned man would doubt (...) that it is the most ancient practice, habitual for kings up to now, to have whatever things are done or happen to be written down in annals for posterity to learn about.’ Ardo’s definition of the term annales was probably a broad one; like Isidore, he referred to chronographic historiography in general, which also included the chronicle. It should also not be assumed that the kings of which Ardo wrote had written down ‘whatever things are done’ on account of some

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95 I follow McKitterick, History and Memory, pp. 97-100. McKitterick argues that the development of Carolingian annals was a parallel and pluriform, rather than linear, process.

antiquarian or conceited interest. Historiography had a wide array of functions that were often overlapping and seldom mutually exclusive. With the biblical past understood as a linear precursor to, and a prefiguration of, present and future events, contemporary events required exegesis as much as biblical ones did.97 Because both chronicles and, especially, annals only provide their readership with a selection and sequencing of events, Karl-Ferdinand Werner may well be right in arguing that it was left to the ruler and his inner circle of advisers to interpret these occurrences, distil divine tokens and forebodings from them, and use these as a basis for future policy.

The more elaborate ‘major’ annals acquired a moralizing quality due to the occasional introduction of interpretive elements that are absent in ‘minor’ annals, and which they appear to have borrowed from the chronicle. In a case where a set of minor annals would typically state that ‘in year “x” king “y” [and one is to assume his army, too] proceeded to “z”’, the authors of major annals would sometimes add a motive, explaining that duke ‘z’ had caused offense to king ‘y’. These explanations (or more properly: justifications), though commonly encountered in the narrative of the Continuations, only occasionally feature in the earliest section of the ARF. After all, their purpose was no longer exclusively to contemplate the visible expressions of divine providence, but to promote – and occasionally protect – the reputation of the Carolingian dynasty by justifying and commemorating its triumphs.

### 1.6. Carolingian historiography in context

The audience for which Carolingian historiography was written belonged to the same group of privileged people that produced it: the court community. Membership of this community far exceeded the king’s inner circle of palace-dwellers and included the entire network of secular and ecclesiastical elites, or all those who occupied a position of authority that relied on the wealth and privileges bestowed upon them by the ruler. But although the members of this community ‘shared an awareness of collective interests,’ they ‘also had their factional or individual goals to pursue, in competition with others.’98

Carolingians may have dominated the limelight of these narratives, other members of the court community significantly operated in the background of these texts. Historiography was part of a semi-public polemical discourse, in which the Frankish elite, often through subtle signals, vied for royal favour, incriminated or humiliated rivals, confirmed alliances, or made overtures for

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97 See above, note 94.
future ones.\textsuperscript{99} To an outsider looking in, for example the modern historian, such signals might prove difficult to register. Court-oriented historiography offered a semi-public stage that allowed its authors and readership to reflect on the social hierarchies within their community, in a context of commemoration and celebration of the ruling dynasty’s successes. For example, Childebrand, writing for a contemporary readership, can be seen to claim a dominant position in the social hierarchy by expressing his close association with the dynasty. In the \textit{Continuations}, he presents himself as the brother of Charles Martel, a duke of Burgundy, and a mentor of Pippin.\textsuperscript{100} This was also a successful strategy to ensure his commemoration in the long run: men like Childebrand or Ermold are known almost exclusively through their own writings.\textsuperscript{101}

The close link between Frankish historiography and the Carolingian court is reflected in the identities of the authors, insofar these are known. The majority of our sources remain anonymous. In most cases, history was written by prominent men closely associated with the court, if not directly related to the dynasty itself.\textsuperscript{102} The \textit{Continuations}, for example, were composed under the aegis of Childebrand, who claimed to have been a half-brother of Charles Martel.\textsuperscript{103} The identity of the authors of the \textit{ARF}, or those who oversaw their composition, has been the subject of much debate, but it is generally assumed that these annals must have been composed under the supervision of someone high-up the hierarchical ladder.\textsuperscript{104} When the Carolingian empire was divided in 841, the \textit{ARF} was continued in the western kingdom under the auspices of high-ranking men such as Archbishop Drogo of Metz (d. 855), Bishop Prudentius of Troyes (d. 861) and Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims (d. 882).

In some cases rulers personally commissioned a historiographical work. Nithard’s \textit{Histories}, for example, had been commissioned by Emperor Charles the Bald (823-877) in the early 840s.\textsuperscript{105} Like Childebrand, Nithard was an illegitimate member of the dynasty. Notker’s \textit{Gesta Karoli} was commissioned by Emperor Charles the Fat (839-888). Conversely, as the example of Ermold the Black’s poems reveals, histories were also written to gain or regain royal favour. Regino, formerly abbot of Prüm, may be another example of an exile looking for a way back into the royal court. Having been deposed as abbot of

\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Continuations}, cc. 20 and 24.
\textsuperscript{102} Airle, ‘The world, the text and the Carolingian’, 61-2.
\textsuperscript{103} See n. 100.
\textsuperscript{105} Nithard, \textit{Histories}, prologue.
Prüm, he composed his bulky chronicle in nearby Trier, dedicating it to Bishop Adalbero of Augsburg, the tutor of Louis IV, the Child (893-911).\textsuperscript{106} Recently, it has been argued that Hincmar of Rheims wrote his treatise \textit{De ordine palatii}, though not a work of history per se, for a similar purpose.\textsuperscript{107}

Einhard, the author of the \textit{Vita Karoli}, had been his protagonist's loyal courtier for most of his life and referred to him in the prologue of his work as his 'lord and provider' (\textit{dominus et nutritor}).\textsuperscript{108} His biography illustrates how the writing of history was used to strengthen the social and political relations between members of the community.\textsuperscript{109} After he completed the \textit{Vita Karoli}, Einhard sent it to Walahfrid Strabo (abbot of Reichenau, c. 807-849), who commended Einhard on his literary masterpiece and in turn added a preface to his work.\textsuperscript{110} When Lupus of Ferrières managed to obtain the \textit{Life}, he wrote to Einhard: 'your work came into my hand, in which (may I speak without suspicion of flattery) you gloriously set forth the glorious deeds of the aforesaid emperor.'\textsuperscript{111} While their compliments were no doubt sincere, neither Walahfrid nor Lupus was writing a book review, but, through their positive and very public association with Einhard's work, was signalling their allegiance to Einhard and his network. In this context, the history of the Carolingians was a common ground – a \textit{lingua franca} – to be used by all men of influence to convey messages of association or disassociation to other members of the court community.

As Innes and McKitterick have noted, early medieval audiences consisted of a series of concentric circles which comprised different audiences for a text, received the text in different ways and reached different conclusions from reading it.\textsuperscript{112} Although most extant Carolingian historiography shows few signs of having been read by a very large audience, for example because many works survive in just one or two manuscripts, there were also 'bestsellers' in circulation, such as the \textit{ARF} or Einhard's \textit{Vita Karoli}.\textsuperscript{113} The high-ranking men associated with these texts as authors, patrons or commissioners, gave these writings a degree of authority that other texts – composed or promoted by less

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\textsuperscript{106} MacLean, \textit{Kingship and Politics}, pp. 7-8.
\textsuperscript{107} Patzold, 'Konsens und Konkurrenz', 87-8.
\textsuperscript{108} Einhard, \textit{VK}, prologue.
\textsuperscript{109} Patzold, 'Einhards erste Leser'.
\textsuperscript{110} Einhard, \textit{VK}, pp. xxvii-xxix.
\textsuperscript{112} Innes and McKitterick, 'The writing of history', 202.
\textsuperscript{113} On the manuscript dissemination of Einhard's \textit{Vita Karoli}, see: Tischler, \textit{Einharts Vita Karoli. For an overview of the manuscript dissemination of the ARF, the best study remains Kurze, ‘Reichsannalen, 1’. Also see: chapter two and appendix 1.}
\end{flushright}
prominent men – probably lacked. The success of the *Vita Karoli* probably owed to a combination of the quality of Einhard’s Latin, the subject matter and the prominence of the author and his high-placed sponsors. Such personal associations were key to the successful dissemination of historiographical texts and an important factor in the formation process of a select corpus of texts from which could eventually derive a consensus view on the Frankish past.  

As we have seen, the extant letters, diplomas and law texts from Pippin’s reign, though limited in number, can be used to complement the image of Pippin and his siblings as constructed in later Carolingian historiography. This is not to say that contemporary sources – even those of the administrative kind – are any less ‘constructed’ than later ones. If anything, the prologues ascribed to the court notary Baddilo reveal that Pippin’s own scribes were just as adamant about constructing an embellished image of the new regime in the texts they produced. In the three case studies of this thesis, I occasionally compare the testimony of Carolingian historiographical narratives against the claims made in contemporary, non-historiographical accounts. But just as two corroborating testimonies are by themselves not evidence that their claims are objectively true, I am equally reluctant to pass judgment should these testimonies contradict. Rather than to accept one claim as ‘true’ and discard the other as ‘false’, it suffices to merely establish their dissimilarity and proceed with the question *why* they are different. But before we begin to investigate the changing literary reception of the three major crises of Pippin’s reign, I first turn to the *Continuations to the Chronicle of Fredegar* and the *Annales Regni Francorum* (or *ARF*). These are the two most contemporary Frankish historiographical narratives that tell us about Pippin’s reign and have had a very significant impact on the way later generations, up to the present one, came to view the reign of Pippin the Short.

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