When Emperor Julian came to power his beard, after generations of
government by clean-shaven Christian generals, was—as Peter Brown
recognized—a 'pointed reminder' that a late-antique intellectual was
now on the throne. This symbolism was not lost on the educated
public, but even so another interpretation of its meaning was possi-
ble: the beard could be a sign of the barbaric or even seem ridicu-
lus. Thus, the people of Antiochia laughed about his beard. The
beard is portrayed differently by Augustine several years later: "The
beard signifies strong men; the beard signifies young, vigorous, active,
quick men. When therefore we describe such men, we say that a
man is bearded." Thus, the same sign was perceived differently by
different groups. Furthermore, one could combine seemingly incon-
sistent signs in one person.

For example, as the sixth century began, Ennodius wrote of a cer-
tain Jovinian that "although he had a Gothic beard [he] went about
wearing a lacerna . . . I am amazed at the races contrasted in [one]
immoderate body." In Jovinian's case, the beard represented descent
from a specific gens. Differing symbols that represented a person or
a people, for example Jovinian's Gothic beard and Roman clothing,
could contradict one another, but they also could be interpreted in

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1 P. Brown, Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1982)
Epistolae ad Walcherum, Burchardi Apologia de barbis), ed. R.B.C. Huygens, Corpus
Christianorum. Continuatio Medievales 62 (Turnhout 1985) p. 86. I have kept the
bibliography minimal. I am grateful to Mayke de Jong, Ian N. Wood and Walter
Pohl for their helpful comments on earlier drafts. I would like to thank Richard
Corradini and Helmut Reimitz for their help and Karl R. Giesriegl for advice on
the Lex Salica.


3 Augustine, Enarratio in psalmos 132, 7, ed. E. Dekkers and I. Fraipont, Corpus
"Introduction", p. 60.

4 Ennodius, Carmen 2, 57 (Opus 182), ed. F. Vogel, MGH AA 7 (Berlin 1885)
various ways by different observers, as Julian's beard shows. Although clearly-visible and easily-manipulable, aspects of the body, the hair and beard were, at the same time, dependent upon their context. They could be used to refer to multiple social groupings: a gens, a hierarchy within a certain society, an ecclesiastical office, and so on. They could also be used to indicate different social practices or social states, for example mourning, war, the burden of an oath, or punishment. Julian's unkempt and lice-infested beard prompted him to say: "I look like a man expiating a crime." In this symbolic world, the hair and beard styles of both emperors and subjects were expressions of a specific way of life. Combined with other elements of the available repertoire of symbols, hair and beards were employed as a form of self-fashioning—as they were in Julian's case.

For the Merovingian family, the question of hairstyles was slightly different. For them, hairstyle was less an expression of individual character than an indication that they were members of an exclusive group, set apart from the rest of the people. Indeed the way in which they wore their hair seems to have remained constant throughout centuries. In the depictions of the Merovingian family surviving in Frankish historical writing, from Gregory of Tours' sixth-century Decem libri Historiarum to Einhard's early ninth-century obituaries, the long hair of the Merovingians was considered their typical and exclusive trait. The portrait of the king on a seal found in the tomb of

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6 Bartlett, "Symbolic meanings of hair", p. 60.
7 W. Pohl, "Aux origines d'une Europe ethnique: Transformations d'identités entre antiquité et moyen âge", Annales ESC (in press).
Childeric I\textsuperscript{12} shows him wearing a similar hair style to that of a head illuminated in an eighth-century Bamberg codex (Staatsbibliothek, MS patr. 61 olim HJ. IV. 15), a codex that preserves—among other texts—Gregory of Tours' \textit{De cursu stellarum ratio}.\textsuperscript{13} The accuracy of these depictions is further supported by Priscus' brief description of a Frankish prince. Dating from the middle of the fifth century, and thus roughly contemporary with Childeric, the prince's hair is described in terms that match the depiction of both Childeric's signet ring and the Bamberg Codex.\textsuperscript{14} Later, in the eighth century, Theophanes was to say of the Merovingians that "... the descendants of that family were called crested, which is translated into Greek as \textit{having hair on the back}, for they had hair growing out of their back, like swine.\textsuperscript{15}

The longevity of the royal hairstyle underlines the importance that it had for the Merovingians, even as Gregory's account of Gundovald's \textit{origo}, or childhood, does. In addition a remark that the boy was "educated with great care" and taught to "read and write", Gregory mentions that little Gundovald "wore his hair long and down his back, as is the custom of the Frankish kings."\textsuperscript{16} Due to the fact that Gundovald's descent was a debated issue among the Merovingians themselves, with Chlothar I repeatedly denying that he was the boy's father, Gregory's brief listing of the important issues surrounding the raising of a Merovingian illustrates the vital role that the traditional hairstyle played within the royal family as well as with all the Franks.


\textsuperscript{13} See the representation of Merovingian kings in Ph. Lauer and Ch. Samaran, \textit{Les diplômes originaux des Mérovingiens} (Paris 1908) Pl. 43. Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek MS patr. 61 (Italy, 8th century) fol. 79r. See A. Cameron, "How did the Merovingian kings wear their hair?", \textit{Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire} 43 (1964) pp. 1203–1216, here 1214f. For the date and place of origin of the manuscript: E.A. Lowe, \textit{The Beneventan Script} (Oxford 1914) pp. 20, 305.


\textsuperscript{15} Cameron, "How did the Merovingian kings wear their hair?", p. 1212.

\textsuperscript{16} Gregory of Tours, \textit{Historiae} VI, 24, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH SS rerum Merovingicarum 1, 1 (Hannover 1951) p. 231: \ldots \textit{ut regum istorum nos est, crinium flagellis per terga dimissi}. \ldots
In the course of this article, an effort will be made to examine the context in which reports of Merovingian hair or hairstyles were made and transmitted, in order to understand their function. This effort will encompass hagiographical, historiographical and legal texts. Various models which have hitherto been employed in order to explain the significance of these hairstyles will be examined. Was the hairstyle of Germanic origin? This view was often combined with an evolutionist model of a gradual development of Frankish kingship from pagan origins to its full christianization under the Carolingians. Consequently, the question of the significance of hairstyles as expressions of social practice among the Frankish people will lead us beyond the specific case of the Merovingians to the more universal question of the context of social practice itself, within which such signs function. Furthermore this field of enquiry demands the consideration of the textual strategies at work in the tradition.

A fundamental question in any study of Merovingian hair is whether it was in and of itself the symbol of 'la distinction', or whether, as many scholars have claimed, a greater importance has been assigned to something that was merely one point of difference among many. Scholars have in fact tried various approaches to explain the meaning and function of the hairstyles of the regni criniti. Marc Bloch, for example, described the hair of the Merovingians as 'un symbole d'ordre surnaturel', containing a 'valeur magique'. Perey Ernst Schramm, in turn, spoke of a 'primitiv-magische ... Vorstellung'. Vilhelm Gronbech searched for connections between antique, early-medieval and Old Norse descriptions of the 'Germanen' and placed hair styles, among other elements, in a field of tension between 'Heil' and 'Unheil'. Ernst Kaufmann drew a connection between the image of a Germanic Königsheil and both magic and sacrality: he saw the king's hair as a symbol of kingship as well as the expression of

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18 Only a very abbreviated and incomplete sketch of scholarly opinions has been made here.
the magical power of the king himself. In this view, cutting the king’s hair was primarily an attempt to avoid shedding royal blood, and thereby endangering the ‘sacral order’.

Valerie Flint went so far as to collect virtually all textual passages employed in ‘sacral kingship’ and ‘Königsheil’ theories that also concerned ‘magic’, and descriptions of Merovingian hair can be found among them. “It is possible that the special blood of the blood magus was, on occasion, seen as magically manifest in his hair.” Even František Graus, normally an opponent of theories of sacrality, ascribed magical elements to the Merovingians on the basis of their long hair. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, in his outstanding monograph “The Long-Haired Kings”, distanced himself from this tradition, arguing that “… social standing, as much as magical properties, may have been symbolized by their long hair.”

As this overview shows, the reges criniti have mostly been analysed in the context of the debate over sacral kingship and ‘Königsheil’ and obscured by the confused terminology this debate has created. Eve Picard has demonstrated how scholars have defined attitudes like ‘Königsheil’ or ‘sacral kingship’ quite differently, and concepts such as “… sacral, holy, magical, cultic, religious, mythical, divine, transcendent, charismatic and supra-human… were defined in different ways—if at all.” Picard’s deconstruction showed that the scholarly tradition she criticized not only bore a heavy ideological burden, but exhibited real problems with method and language. This conclusion in turn raised the question of whether the ensemble of textual passages studied by the various research traditions (for instance, the Germania of Tacitus and Old Norse sagas) could in fact be subsumed within the category of ‘Königsheil’ or sacral kingship at all.

The first step that must be taken in an examination of Merovingian hairstyle is to note that it was an exclusive symbol of the royal family. In 584, for example, a fisherman found the corpse of Clovis, a son of Chilperic I, on the banks of the Marne. The fisherman was immediately able to recognize that this was the body of a member of the royal family, due to its long flowing hair: *caesaria prolixa cognovi*. Even during the subsequent exhumation of the body the hair, by then partially lost, served to identify the dead. Gregory of Tours in fact characterized the hair of the royal family as *ut regum istorum mos est, crinium flagellis per terga missis*. The fact that the Merovingian kings and only the Merovingian kings were differentiated by their hair from the rest of the Franks can also be seen from the 'ethnographical' perspective taken by the Byzantine author Agathias. Writing in the middle of the sixth century, Agathias described a battle between the Burgundians and the Franks that had taken place in 524; it was in this fight that the Frankish King Chlodomer fell.

And when he fell, the Burgundians, seeing his hair flowing and abundant, loose down to his back, at once realized that they had killed the enemy leader. For it is the rule for Frankish kings never to be shorn; instead, their hair is never cut from childhood on, and hangs down in abundance on their shoulders. Their front hair is parted on the forehead and falls down on either side. Their hair is not uncombed and dry and dirty and braided up in a messy knot like that of the Turks and Avars; instead, they anoint it with unguents of different sorts, and carefully comb it. Now it is their custom to set it apart as a distinguishing mark and special prerogative for the royal house. For their subjects have their hair cut all round, and are not permitted to grow it further.

Agathias' account agrees with that of Gregory of Tours, and it is thus safe to assume that in the sixth century the hairstyle of the Frankish kings did in fact differ from that of the rest of the Franks. Reports from the fifth century, however, show a different picture of conspicuous hairstyles in Gaul. Sidonius Apollinaris not only complained about the long-haired hordes of Burgundians that lived near him.
and smeared their hair with butter, but described the Franks defeated by Majorian in the following terms:

Drawn down from a reddish head, the hair hangs down onto the forehead, and the bared neck shines from lack of hair... as their faces are shaved everywhere, they pass the comb through the thin hair on top of their heads instead of the beards.  

Sidonius describes the hair of the Saxons in yet another way. In the fifth century, it would thus seem that in Gaul several groups existed side by side with differing traditional hairstyles. It is, however, likely that Sidonius came into contact only with small groups from each gens, and it should also be noted that accounts of ethnic differences are commonly afflicted with topoi. Furthermore, in the case of the Franks, Gregory of Tours reports in the sixth century that Childeric, a nobleman serving Sigibert I, wore a beard; he thus embodied a style that according to Sidonius did not characterize the Franks at all. As Walter Pohl has emphasized, Greeks and Romans considered long hair to be ‘typical’ of barbarians—a stereotype underlined by the fact that Julius Caesar named the newly-won Gallic provinces Gallia comata. Sidonius Apollinaris himself made use of literary templates during his descriptions of different gentes, with the result that (as Averil Cameron has shown) comparable antique sources such as Claudian can only be applied to the Merovingians with care. Difficulty thus arises in any attempt to differentiate among these early reports, and to use these first accounts to inquire into the ‘original’ meaning of Merovingian hair.

Scholars have often postulated a special bond between the Merovingians and the Franks, created by a sacral legitimation of the royal family. As a part of this scholarly effort, particular emphasis has


32 See Pohl, “Telling the difference”, p. 55.

33 Pohl, “Telling the difference”; id., “Aux origines d’une Europe ethnique”.

34 About Sigibert: Gregory of Tours, Liber in gloria confessorum 70, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SS rerum Merovingicarum 1,2 (Hannover 1885) p. 339; Pohl, “Telling the difference”, p. 52.

been placed on Fredegar's account of the birth of Merovech. This account, however, has recently been subjected to new scrutiny. This approach also leads to further perplexities about the meaning of the Merovingian hairstyle.

The first reports of the reges criniti can be found in Gregory of Tours, who provides a brief account of the early history of the Franks. According to Gregory, the Franks (after crossing the Rhine) had selected reges criniti from the ranks of their first family to be placed over them. That this family actually should be counted as their first and best had been demonstrated by the deeds of Clovis. Gregory also tells us that Merovech himself was probably a member of this family, but the Bishop of Tours does not make further mention of the hairstyle of the kings in this passage. This may be due to the fact that, as Gregory admits, it was unclear whether the first leaders of the Franks were kings at all, or whether they simply acted as such.

In contrast to Gregory, Fredegar links the origin myth of the Merovingians directly with Merovech, supposed founder of the family that bore his name. Alexander Murray, however, has with good reason called the historicity of this passage, designated as a 'cultic myth' by Karl Hauck, into question. According to Murray, Fredegar's account of the first Merovingians was less an expression of an older tradition and more a product of the seventh century. Ian Wood has in turn repeatedly stressed the fabulous and anecdotal character of the passage, as well as the many oddities of the text. Fredegar's perspective is in fact Pippinid; from this standpoint, his version of the birth of Merovech can be seen as a rather ironic account of the royal family's origin. It remains questionable whether Fredegar did indeed base his account on extant mythical images, but it seems

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38 Gregory of Tours, Historiae II, 9, p. 57.
likely that his persiflage is founded upon his playful use of the reader's own knowledge. In any case the reports of long Merovingian hair are hardly connected with this mythical depiction of Merovingian origins. Quinotaurus, who along with the wife of Chlodio supposedly parented Merovech in the sea, was assigned a multitude of attributes, but among them, nothing is indicative of the traditional Merovingian hairstyle. The only possible connection to be found is a scholium to Homer's Odyssey (XI, 321), where a note that Ariadne advised Theseus to cut off the hair of the minotaur and sacrifice it to Poseidon has been added to the text of the epic. It is, however, improbable that one comment made by a scribe in a single Greek manuscript of the Odyssey was well-known in the Latin West.

Whether or not the story of the birth of Merovech formed an account of the *origo* of the royal family that seventh-century society could believe, the hairstyle of the Merovingians was not an integral element of that origin legend. If, however, Fredegar's text is in fact a form of banter, the seventh-century author saw no reason to caricature this special hallmark of the family. Theudomer, the son of Richemer, *ex genere Priami, Frigi et Francionis*, is in fact the first *rex crinitus* encountered in the *Chronicae*, we also find the comment that the king, as in earlier times, was marked by his long hair. The hair style of the kings is thus kept separate from their ostensible Trojan origin.

The anonymous author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, writing in 727, also did not connect the special hair style of the Frankish kings with the eponymous founder of their house. According to the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, the Franks decided, after the death of their *princeps* Sunno, to follow the example of other peoples and to elect a king. They therefore selected the son of the *princeps* Marchomir, Faramund, to be their *rex crinitus*. After his death he was succeeded as *rex crinitus* by Chlodio, and from then on the long hair of the

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41 See Murray, "*Post vocantur Merohingii*", pp. 137–140.
42 See Pauly's *Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft* 14 (München 1912) col. 2105.
46 *Liber Historiae Francorum* 5, p. 243.
The king was supposedly the rule. It is a son of Chlodio, Merovech, who is then said to have given his name to the Frankish royal house.

Neither Gregory, Fredegar, nor the Liber Historiae Francorum associate the hair of the Merovingians with a mythical narrative. Even Einhard, when he later created his anecdote of the Merovingians, evoked the image of the long-haired kings without mentioning a mythical narrative. Furthermore, in accounts of one of the crucial turning points in both Frankish and Merovingian history, the baptism of Clovis, the hair of the king is given only an indirect role. In fact, it is unclear whether Avitus' comment *cum sub cassyde crinis nutritae salutarem galeam sacris unctionis indueret* in fact refers to the specific meaning of the royal hair.47 Many parts of the letter of Avitus to Clovis are extremely formulaic,48 and need not refer to pagan actualities of the Merovingian King's life. With the exception of this single mention, Clovis' hair is not considered by early-medieval writers to be important in a sacral context—even if such a sacral context was (following Murray) a seventh-century construct.

It is thus clear the hair of the Merovingians was not usually connected to sacral contexts by contemporaries. Even the concept of 'magic' that scholars have repeatedly transported to Merovingian hair needs to be investigated, a task which this article cannot address. If from among the vast multitude of definitions of 'magic' some elemental and 'supernatural' power bound up with an object is selected, it still remains clear that the hair of the Merovingians itself received no special emphasis. No special treatment of cut hair from the royal family is reported, in striking contrast to the treatment afforded the hair of many saints. When for example St Eligius had his beard and hair trimmed, a woman gathered the locks; these were honored after the saint's death as relics. In fact, we are told that Eligius' hair was collected on two occasions.49 Nor is this the only example: water


48 Compare, for example, Gregory of Tour's depiction of Frankish paganism: Gregory of Tours, *Historiae II*, 10, pp. 58–60.

49 *Vita Eligii episcopi Noviomagensis* 68 and 69, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SS rerum Merovingiarum 4 (Hannover and Leipzig 1902) pp. 734ff. Eligius himself is described as having beautiful, curly hair see *Vita Eligii* 12, p. 638.
and burned hair of St Rusticula were said to have healed a person possessed by a midnight demon, while Charlemagne himself is said to have kept a lock of the Virgin Mary’s hair in an amulet. Nowhere is such a treatment of Merovingian hair recorded. It is thus questionable whether it is valid to discuss ‘magical’ functions of Merovingian kingly hair, as no account of the powers of the hair itself has survived.

Scholarly models of sacral kingship, blood and magic thus fall short when attempting to explain the meaning of hair to the Merovingians. These models have in fact often removed textual passages from their context, connecting or comparing them to others that appeared similar. These similarities are, of course, subjective. Other passages were isolated from other interpretations of their meaning.

In any review of the diverse, pre-sixth-century observations of the Franks, the question of the origins, the genesis and the practices associated with these same hairstyles must arise. Special meanings of hair are in fact not restricted to the Merovingians. The sources best suited for a consideration of practice would seem to be the *Leges*, which themselves can be viewed not only in a legal sense but also as a means of defining or creating identity. In fact, one of the roots of the scholarly tradition that propagated the idea of “sacral kingship” grew from questions of constitutional and legal history, which in addition to other sources made heavy use of the *Leges* of individual gentes. Several laws exhibiting pagan elements can indeed be

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found in these codes, among which the *Lex Salica* can be numbered—a text which is not only among the earliest, but which supposedly was created during the reign of Clovis.

Regardless of its exact age, it does not appear likely that the *Lex Salica* first appeared in the 65-chapter version now preserved in several manuscripts. Rather, it is much more likely that in the time of Clovis individual passages were already available. And in the course of time some passages were subsequently assembled and expanded, and among them one is particularly worthy of note: we find that shaving a *puer crinitus* without the permission of his parents is an offense that demands a severe monetary compensation. This ordinance in all probability refers to the *capillatura* (followed later by the *barbatoria*), a young man’s ceremonial first haircut. This custom was derived from Greek and Roman tradition, where the razoring was celebrated with great pomp and the shaved hair was dedicated to a deity. The ritual survived the conversion to Christianity, and we thus find in the autobiography of Paulinus of Nola that Paulinus dedicated the first hairs of his beard to God; we also find that the Old Gelasian Sacramentary supplies an *oratio pro eo qui prius barbam tundit* immediately after an *oratio ad capillaturum*. Mention of this custom also appears in the tenth book of Gregory of Tours’ *Historiae*, where we are told that one of the accusations leveled by Chlothild and Basina against the abbess of Poitiers, Leubovera, was that she had, among other alleged crimes, supposedly allowed a ritual shav-

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55 *Puer crinitus* is probably also meant in an analogous sense as *puer crinitus*.
56 See Y. Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, A.D. 481–751. Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions* (Leiden 1995) p. 139: “Yet, there is no evidence . . . that Capillaria in the Merovingian context was different from Barbatoria.”
ing (barbaturias) to be celebrated at the convent.60 In both the Lex Romana Visigothorum and the Lex Romana Curiensis from the eight-century barbatoria are mentioned.61 The Lex Romana Curiensis interprets a late antique imperial rescript about public holidays. The text delivers a contemporary interpretation of these celebrations: the raising of the king on his shield, a royal wedding and the barbaturia.62

During the shaving ritual, a specific relationship was created between the barber and the young man whose hair or beard were cut.63 The most prominent examples of this are Clovis and Alaric, although in their case the Gothic king only touched the hair of the Merovingian.64 Paul the Deacon reports such a relationship between Charles Martel’s son Pippin and the Lombard king Liutprand.65 He also tells us a grisly story about Gregory, Patrician of the Romans, who promised to Taso, duke of Friuli, that “he would cut his beard as is the custom and make him his son”; however, he killed him instead, but to keep his promise he then shaved the dead duke.66 It would seem that the Germanic ‘rite of passage’67 described by Tacitus, namely the award of a spear and a shield to a young man by his father or another great man, was replaced by this Roman custom.68

There can be no doubt that the Lex Salica refers to this ‘rite de passage’, the ceremonial first hair-cut. Bruno Krusch has in fact taken the reference one step further, and posed the question of who


64 Fredegar, Chronicae II, 58, p. 82.


66 Paulus Diaconus, Historia Langobardorum IV, 38, p. 132.


could have had an interest in cutting the hair or shaving someone’s child without permission of the parents.\textsuperscript{69} Review of the different recensions of the \textit{Lex Salica} shows, however, that this clause does not appear in the earliest version, supposedly dating from the time of Clovis. In the manuscript labeled A1 by the editor, Eckhardt,\textsuperscript{70} it appears in the addenda [A3].\textsuperscript{71} Apparently, it was integrated into the main text in subsequent versions.\textsuperscript{72} According to this later addition, which probably dates from some time in the second half of the sixth century, a compensation of 45 \textit{solidi} is prescribed for the offense. Later versions (C 6) raise this figure to 62 \textit{solidi}.\textsuperscript{73} Furthermore, although the \textit{capillatora} and \textit{barboratoria} concern the shaving of boys, in the \textit{Lex Salica} the same restrictions and compensations could be applied to girls. To cut the hair of a girl without the permission of the parents was an offense assigned a \textit{compensatio} of 45 \textit{solidi}, another Carolingian edition (K) raised this to 62 \textit{solidi}.\textsuperscript{74}

This clause, applying to boys as well as to girls, probably refers to cutting hair without permission in an ecclesiastical context. It might be the reason that the punishments were set so high by the Merovingians as well as the Carolingians. For there is little doubt that the Carolingians, in their eighth- and ninth-century emendations to the \textit{Lex Salica}, did apply the law to the practice of involuntary ecclesiastical tonsure. In 818/819 Louis the Pious, for example, set a heavy penalty on cutting the hair of boys or veiling girls without the parents’ permission, a clear attempt to address these activities in a monastic context.\textsuperscript{75}

One reason for the interest monastic groups had in children tonsured without parental permission may lie in the \textit{donatio} made to the monastery. That is, although sixth-century parents could freely make


\textsuperscript{71} See Mordek, \textit{Bibliotheca capitularium}, p. 459.

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Pactus legis Salicae} 24, 2 [A 2], ed. K.A. Eckhard, MGH \textit{Leges nationum Germanicarum} 4, 1 (Hannover 1962) p. 90.

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Pactus legis Salicae} 24, 2 [C 6], p. 89.

\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Pactus legis Salicae} 24, 3 [A 2], p. 90; ibid. 24, 3 [K], p. 91.

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Capitula legibus addenda} 818. 819, ed. A. Boretius, MGH \textit{Legum sectio II. Capitularia regum Francorum} I (Hannover 1883) p. 285.
use of their children's inheritance, they stood under a strong moral pressure to care for their souls as well.  

Furthermore, as the *Regula Benedicti* and the *Regula Magistri* show, rights to the inheritance of sixth-century oblates had first to be negotiated. The relationship between families and spiritual communities was thus by no means fixed. Gregory of Tours himself reveals the range of possibilities available to the Church in the acquisition of the possessions of others, even if the example does not concern children: Bishop Bertram of Bordeaux is said to have acquired the fortune of a Syrian merchant by forcibly tonsuring him.

If the statutes of the *Lex Salica* in fact reflect a reaction to ecclesiastical encroachment, it is also the case that specific clauses in the *Lex* address different traditions. That is, a Christianized 'Roman' tradition had replaced a 'Germanic' one, and it was this 'Roman' tradition that was being violated through over-zealous ecclesiastical application. That would seem to be the reason why this issue does not appear in the earliest version of the *Lex Salica*, although as the tenth book of Gregory's *Historiae* shows the *capillatura* and *barbaroria* survived the migration era in Gaul. In any consideration of the hairstyles of the Franks or the Frankish kings, it must therefore be recognized that practices associated with hair in the sixth-century Frankish kingdom did not have roots only in a 'Germanic' pagan tradition.

The adoption of Roman and ecclesiastical customs by the Franks makes it clear that ritual practice did not necessarily remain the same over a long period. Rather, it could be replaced or affirmed by other practices. It thus seems that a ritual could absorb and reflect several meanings, meanings which themselves originated in different traditions. At the same time, it is possible that 'belief' in several different traditions could exist at one time, even as it was possible simultaneously to claim several identities. Belief, in this sense, was an element that could create identity. Soldiers in the service of Rome in fact did not necessarily see Frankish and Roman identities as contradictory, as an oft-cited fourth-century text from Pannonia shows: *Francus ego cives, miles Romanus in armis* ('I am a Frank by nationality

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77 De Jong, *In Samuel’s Image*, pp. 30f. The *Regula Magistri* treats young people as far more independent than the *Regula Benedicti*.

but a Roman soldier under arms"), which is also evident in the case of the aforementioned Jovinian. We should therefore conceive of the Merovingian world as one built from different traditions, and question the existence of an original ‘Germanic’ one that took precedence over any other. That there was no consistent historical ‘evolution’ from the ‘barbarian/Germanic Merovingians’ to the ‘civilized Carolingians’ is made clear by the fact that the supposedly Germanic custom of giving of arms, as described by Tacitus, was not employed by the Merovingians but rather by the Carolingians as Régine Le Jan points out. “Before the eighth century, a youth’s investiture with weapons did not constitute a rite of passage from childhood to young- manhood; in that earlier period, there were other rituals, like the first shaving of the beard, or the hair-cutting, which sanctioned the passage from minority to majority.”

As can be seen from these examples, the significance of the Merovingian hairstyle is based neither on sacral ideology or magic, nor on purely ‘Germanic’ roots. Instead, differing projections and interpretations existed which were not confined to ritual or symbol. Kings themselves were the theme of competing discourses. There existed, for example, in the later phases of Merovingian kingship at least two different conceptions of an ‘ideal’ king. Admonitory and advisory episcopal letters to kings evoked images of a just’ king on the basis of biblical imagery, while as Michael McCormick has shown, the image of a warrior king was widespread in liturgical sources, an image also based on biblical models. These two images were not only transmitted through different media, but in each case probably addressed a different audience.

The various royal images available are also an indication of the plurality of forms of belief.\textsuperscript{86} Some groups cultivated traditions which meant nothing to others. When Charlemagne, for example, sought to refine the loyalty oath into a more effective tool,\textsuperscript{87} he had to forbid the practice of swearing by St Stephen and the life of the king and the king’s sons.\textsuperscript{88} Karl Hauck’s claim that this restriction was based upon the ‘holiness’ of royal blood is questionable at best.\textsuperscript{89}

In this volume, Ian Wood discusses the idea of the Merovingian family as a biological unit. This does not only lead to a perception of the Merovingian family as a political construct, but rather calls into question the entire idea of ‘holy’ blood. The practice of oath-giving to Charlemagne and his sons shows on the one hand that there was in all probability a multitude of undocumentable projections placed on the king and his sons by different groups, the origin of which will remain unclear. On the other hand, Charlemagne’s prohibition is also evidence of the fact that such projections could be rejected, as other practices and ideologies were preferred as tools to bind these groups to the king.\textsuperscript{90} It is in this interplay of royal will and the expectations of different groups that the royal hair is to be seen, especially when it is threatened.

Following the death of Clovis, the Frankish kingdom was divided among his four sons, with Chlodomer falling in battle against the Burgundians in 524. Excluding Chlodomer’s sons, the three remaining brothers then divided his territory among themselves. Two of them, Childebert and Chlothar, seized the guardianship of two of their three nephews, Theudobald and Gunthar, who had been reared by their grandmother, Chlothild; the third, Chlodovald, managed to flee and gave up his claim to the inheritance of his father. Childebert then invited his brother Chlothar to Paris to decide the fate of their captured nephews, and the two kings discussed their options: \textit{utrum}

\textsuperscript{86} P. Veyne, \textit{Did the Greeks believe in their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination} (Chicago 1988).
\textsuperscript{87} M. Becher, \textit{Eid und Herrschaft, Untersuchungen zum Herrscherethos Karls des Großen}, Vorträge und Forschungen, Sonderband 39 (Sigmaringen 1993).
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Duplex legationis edictum} (789) 26, MGH Legum Sectio 2. Capitularia regum Francorum 1, ed. A. Boretius (Hannover 1883) p. 64; \textit{Capitulare missorum} (803) 22, ibid., p. 116. See Becher, \textit{Eid und Herrschaft}, pp. 182f.
incisa caesariae ut reliqua plebs habeantur, an certe his interfectis regnum germani nostri inter nosmet ipsius aequilitate habita dividatur?\textsuperscript{91}

Childebert and Chlothar then sent an emissary by the name of Arcadius to queen Chlothild, who had taken charge of two of her grandsons' upbringing following the death of her son Chlodomer (Chlodovald, who as mentioned had managed to flee, entered the church). Arcadius came before the queen with scissors in one hand and a drawn sword in the other, and gave the queen the choice of which hand would mete out the fate of the boys. Chlothild chose the sword for the two that had remained with her. Kings Childebert and Chlothar, after learning of this decision, slew their nephews with their own hands.\textsuperscript{92}

This account of the sad fate of Chlodomer's sons is in one sense a confirmation of Agathias' assertion that the long hair of the Merovingians set them apart from the rest of the Frankish people. In Paris, Chlothar and Childebert supposedly discussed the possibility of cutting their nephew's hair ut reliqua plebs, a comment underlining the fact that the ecclesiastical tonsure was not an option presented to Chlothild's two grandsons. Both Jean Hoyoux and Percy Ernst Schramm sought to explain this hair-cutting in the context of scalping, making reference to the *decalvatio* mentioned in Visigothic sources.\textsuperscript{93} The sixth council of Toledo, for example, issued a decree in 638 listing the criteria for a Visigothic king; according to this list the loss of the hair through *decalvatio* rendered a candidate unfit for the throne.\textsuperscript{94} Any man who had shaved his head in the fashion of a monk, who had lost his hair through the removal of the skin of his head, or was either unfree or not a Goth could not ascend to the throne.\textsuperscript{95} On the one hand, it is unclear whether scalping is actually meant by the word *decalvatio*.\textsuperscript{96} In other Visigothic sources, it is

\textsuperscript{91} Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* III, 18, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{92} Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* III, 18, p. 119.
\textsuperscript{94} VI Toledo. 17, ed. J. Vives, Concilios visigoticos e hispano-romanos (Barcelona and Madrid 1963) p. 245.
\textsuperscript{96} For a critical view, see F.S. Lear, *Treason in Roman and Germanic Law* (Austin 1965) pp. 159f.; and M. de Jong, "Adding insult to injury: Julian of Toledo and
the cutting of hair, rather than scalping, that is referred to. King Wamba, for example, had the hair of the pretender Paulus and some of his followers cut short in 673 as a form of punishment.  

On the other hand, these examples, however, are not from the Frankish kingdom; they stem from a people that did not differentiate itself from the Franks through the practice of scalping alone.

Hoyoux in fact supported his hypothesis, directly inspired by Visigothic examples, by pointing to the use of the verb *tundere* (‘to strike’) in connection with Merovingian hair styles. He saw scalping in these passages, in that the skin of the head was removed from the skull by multiple blows. However, Kaufmann had already pointed out that the verbs *tundere* and *tondere* (‘to shave, shear’) exhibited a particular grammatical inclarity in Frankish manuscripts, and were used synonymously. Chlothild was therefore not faced with a choice between scalping and death for her grandsons, though through modern eyes the queen’s selection of the sword seems all the more irrational if not inhuman.

The loss of the hair meant the loss of a sign, a sign that clearly marked a particular position in social space. Other groups than the Merovingians appear also to have had specific hairstyles, although little information on this is available. The noblemen of the late Merovingian period could be characterized by the manner in which they wore their hair. Bishop Eligius of Noyon is reported to have worn *caesariem formosam et crinem quoque circillatam*. From their beginnings hermits, recluses and anchorites were distinguished by their hair- and beardstyles. For example, Gregory of Tours reports of the recluse Leobardus, who was an exception to the rule: “He was not like those who delight in wearing long hair and long beards, for at fixed time he used to cut his hair and beard.” Clerics, of course,

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97 See de Jong, “Adding insult to injury”, p. 378. In the older literature, this is regarded as scalping.
101 *Vita Eligii* 12, p. 678.
102 Gregory of Tours, *Liber vitae patrum* 20, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SS rerum Merovingicarum 1, 2 (Hannover 1885) p. 293: *Verum non ille, ut quidam, dimissis capillorum flagellis aut barbam dimissione plaudebat, sed certo tempore capillum tondere et barbam. Translation by E. James, Gregory of Tours: Life of the Fathers (Liverpool 1991) pp. 128f.
all wore a uniform hairstyle, although even they (as we find mentioned in Bede) knew variation.¹⁰³

Common to all of these groups is that the compulsory shaving of the hair brings with it the loss of respective status in the social context.¹⁰⁴ Some Merovingians’ hair was cut and they were sent to a monastery, such as Chararic and his son, rivals of Clovis,¹⁰⁵ Merovech, son of Chilperic,¹⁰⁶ Dagobert, the son of Sigibert III¹⁰⁷ as well as Theuderic.¹⁰⁸ This, too, did not apply only to kings: The mayor Ebroin was shorn together with king Theuderic, and then they were sent to separate cloisters. Only when the hair had grown back could any return to one’s prior social status be hoped for. A good example is that of Euphronius.

After the Syrian merchant Euphronius had his hair cut by Bishop Bertram of Bordeaux, he fled to a different town in order to allow his hair to grow back again. He thus left not only the territory of the bishop, but also the confines of the community that had witnessed this treatment. It was in fact impossible for him, when marked by this symbol of spirituality (the tonsure), to remain active as a merchant in the community. Only when the manifestation of episcopal power, in the sense that the bishop controlled the symbol of the tonsure, had disappeared (i.e., his hair had grown back) could Euphronius again fill his accustomed position in the city’s social space.

The same went also for the Merovingians themselves. When Merovech, the rebellious son of Chilperic I, had been captured and was on the way to Saint Calais with only a small number of guards, he was freed by one of his followers. He was forced to cover his shaven head with a hood until his hair had grown back again.¹⁰⁹ Just over a hundred years later, Ebroin waited in Luxeuil for his hair to grow back before once again taking up the struggle for his powerful position as maior domus: Ebroinus capillos cresceresinens.¹¹⁰ At

¹⁰⁵ Gregory of Tours, Historiae II, 41, p. 91.
¹⁰⁶ Gregory of Tours, Historiae V, 14, p. 207.
¹⁰⁷ Liber historiae Francorum 43, p. 316.
¹⁰⁸ Liber historiae Francorum 45, p. 317.
¹¹⁰ Liber Historiae Francorum 45, p. 318.
the beginning of the eighth century a monk by the name of Daniel was taken from a monastery, and after his hair had grown out—cesarie capitis crescente—was crowned king under the name Chilperic.  

What a merchant, a mayor of the palace and a Merovingian had in common in these examples is that they all feared the loss of this social status and to be equated with monks, servants and criminals, with all the social restrictions implied. Thus the difference between these various persons appears to consist solely in the quality of their respective social status, with its authority, responsibilities and ideological significance. The symbolic meanings are manifold and multifaceted. Their origins are obscure, and they change, they can wax and diminish and be regenerated. The example of Chlothild demonstrates that above all personally- and socially-established emotions are connected with the cutting of the hair, and thus contribute to the regeneration of its significance.

It is rare, however, that the cutting of royal hair is presented in such an emotional light as that encountered in Gregory’s account of Chlothild and her grandsons. The emotionality of the queen’s decision is in fact one of the primary reasons why scholars have interpreted the cutting of a Merovingian’s hair as the loss of the innate power of their royal blood (‘Geblütsheil’). Therefore, we have to ask to what extent emotion played a role as both a basis for and an expression of royal action.

When we consider this question, we must first recognize that Gregory of Tours himself was irritated by the queen’s decision. He characterized her as “hardly knowing what she was saying in her anguish”, and as “grieving her heart out”. He also criticized the emissary Arcadius, who took “no notice of her distress”, and who did not wish to see her either give the issue due consideration or change her mind and so hurried off to report her first decision. The passage shows Gregory’s skill in depicting emotion, where the ‘psychology’ of such a situation is skillfully painted for the reader.

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111 Liber Historiae Francorum 52, p. 326: Franci nimium Danielem quondam clericum, cesarie capitis crescente, eum in regnum stabiliunt atque Chilpericum nuncpeant.
113 See, for example, Groenbech, Kultur und Religion 2, p. 101.
114 Gregory of Tours, Historiae III, 18, p. 118.
general, however, Gregory presents the queen in a positive light, as she both brings Clovis closer to Christianity and later grieves for her lost grandsons. The presentation of the queen’s life is one of Gregory’s most striking and emotional literary achievements, not only an indication that women are generally depicted as more emotional than men in his work but also of the fact that he understood how a king or queen could emotionally react. Chlothild’s first glimpse of the scissors and the sword had made her “very angry”, nimium felle commota, a feeling that Clovis himself had shared, felle commotus. Clovis’ anger, however, had been sparked by the death of Ingomer, his first son, in his baptismal dress—for Ingomer had been baptized by Chlothild.

A famous story about Clovis should also be understood in the context of royal anger. In this instance, a warrior was assigned a ewer from a plundered church by lot. After the king had requested that this vessel be awarded to him over and above his normal share (Clovis in fact had promised to return the vessel to the church), the warrior had disagreed and shattered the ewer with his axe. Clovis bore this insult with “long-suffering patience”, patientiae lenitate, and was not able to punish the man until the next muster of the army. Clovis then slew the offender with an axe while simultaneously with the word “this is what you did in Soissons to that ewer”.

Barbara Rosenwein has shown that as Gregory opened the Decem libri historiarum he pointed to, among other elements, the furor regum. The concept of furor, however, is restricted—with one exception—to king Guntram and queens. The majority of emotion depicted in Gregory’s work is in fact expressed in a family context, rather than in public. Gerd Althoff has shown that ‘royal anger’, an emotion felt

116 Gregory of Tours, Historiae II, 29; 30; III, 18; pp. 74f.; 120.
117 Rosenwein, “Writing and emotions”.
118 Gregory of Tours, Historiae III, 18, p. 118.
119 See Liber historiae Francorum 24, p. 280, where her anger goes unmentioned.
120 Gregory of Tours, Historiae II, 29, p. 75. See Rosenwein, “Writing and emotions”, with further examples.
by both Chlothild and Clovis, was an element of the Merovingian and early Carolingian royal repertoire. It both characterized kings and could be used by a king to present himself publicly. Emotions like those described in the texts would be non-verbal signals recognizable by all parties, and were thus part of the public ritual of early-medieval politics. It is, on the other hand, unclear whether Clovis’ initial restraint and delayed vengeance on the Marchfield can simply be interpreted as a royal demonstration of power, one that was suited to the non-verbal channels of communication established by his society. A deliberate employment of symbolic action is certainly to be seen, but cannot be postulated for every public emotional act. The example is much more an illustration of the fact that a king had to conform to the rules dictated by the social consensus, accepting both the boundaries of his power and when necessary awaiting an appropriate moment to take action. The example of the Marchfield emphasized that emotions did not necessarily have to be shown immediately, and that royal urges in and of themselves did not carry weight—rather, what counted were the emotions that were created in those who witnessed royal action. Gregory’s account of the Marchfield is in fact closed with the comment that Clovis had instilled a “mighty dread” in the Franks.

Both hidden and expressed royal emotion may well have been employed as a socially-determined non-verbal language, at times artificial. Much more meaningful, however, is the fact that Clovis moved within a restricted social space which limited his options. Still, he managed to use his potential in a way that inspired awe and provoked an emotional reaction in his audience. If we follow Max Weber, we could see this episode as an example of ‘charismatic lordship’ based on “the extraordinary devotion to the sanctity or the heroic force or the exemplary nature of a person and the order revealed or created by this person.” But such concepts hardly suffice to characterize the complex power relationships found in Merovingian

125 Gregory of Tours, Historiae II, 27, p. 73.
lordinship. Rather, it was the case that a ruler, as Pierre Bourdieu recognized, had to strive daily and personally to produce and reproduce the constantly uncertain basis of lordship. Above all, this effort was concentrated on the effort to acquire "symbolic capital". The events on the Marchfield are an excellent indication of how during negotiation for economic capital—in this case, booty—symbolic capital, the bond between social groups, was won.

Any accumulation or concentration of symbolic capital is fed by the tension between different positions of power, and follows its own logic. Chlothild's decision to allow her grandsons to be slain rather than have their hair cut underlines the fact that the hairstyle of the Merovingians represented part of the symbolic capital of the family. Her decision was not based upon an emotional logic, as Gregory indirectly expected from her. Although we know from Rosenwein's work that Gregory employed emotional terminology mainly in familial frameworks, other emotions than love for grandchildren matter in this episode. At work is also the concept of honour, which Bourdieu himself chose as an example of symbolic capital. This concept is, however, heavily burdened by older German-language scholarship, and it is difficult to use it to describe the implications of Merovingian prestige.

Cutting or removal of the hair could of course evoke 'private' emotions, as well as 'official' or 'ritual' ones. After Chararic, a Frankish king whose territory is uncertain, had failed to support Clovis' campaign against Syagrius, he and his son were taken prisoner by subterfuge. Clovis had both of them bound and their hair cut short; Chararic was ordained a priest and his son a deacon. When Chararic protested this humiliation and wept—*humilite sua conquereret et fieret*—his son is supposed to have said:

> These leaves have been cut from wood which is still green and not lacking in sap. They will soon grow again and be larger than ever; and may the man who has done this deed perish equally quickly.

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127 Gregory of Tours, *Histories* II, 27, p. 72. It is remarkable that a warrior remarks that Clovis already possessed everything anyway.


129 See Rosenwein, "Writing and emotions".

130 Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* II, 41, p. 91: *'In viridi', inquit, 'lignum haec frondis succasae sunt nec omnino ariscunt, sed velociter emergent, ut crescere queant; utinam tam velociter qui haec fecit intereat!"*
This was a threat to grow out their hair and kill Clovis. The practice of ecclesiastical tonsure offered by conversion to Christianity seems in fact rarely to have been a successful means of eliminating opponents, and in the case of Chararic and his son Clovis in fact had them killed—an option he selected for many other members of his family as well.

Strong emotion could also lead to the cutting or removal of hair. As Gundovald, the Merovingian pretender and alleged son of Chlothar, was struck by a stone thrown by Boso and fell,

The mob surrounded him and prodded him with their spears. They tied his feet together with a rope and dragged him through the whole army encampment. They pulled out his hair and beard. They left his body unburied on the spot where he had met his death.

It is conceivable that this treatment was selected due to the fact that Gundovald had dared to claim he was a Merovingian, and in his attempt to lay claim to the symbolic capital of the family had, among other things, adopted the royal hairstyle. Although we should be aware that the definition of who was actually a Merovingian was not necessarily dependent on actual biological arguments, this public humiliation of Gundovald's body and in particular the tearing out of his hair points to the great value that was placed upon the exclusivity of this symbol. This example is also an indication of the fact that it was not only the Merovingians themselves that enforced this exclusivity, but that it was recognized and defended by the Frankish people. This symbolic capital was thus fed not only through the efforts of the Merovingians themselves, but also through a multitude of practices by various Frankish individuals or groups.

With every individual treatment regarding hair, whether the cutting of an opponent's hair or the public and post-mortem humiliation inflicted upon an apparently 'false' Merovingian, the significance of long hair as a symbol was strengthened. As later attempts by adoptive Merovingians or royal family members who had been in a monastery to seize power show, the symbolic capital of the Merovingian

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131 James, "Bede and the tonsure question", p. 91.
132 Gregory of Tours, Historiae II, 41, pp. 91f.
134 See Ian Wood in this volume.
family was maintained—even if some members were rather limited in the personal power that they exercised. The logic of symbolic power, after all, need not be thoroughly consistent.

Collecting and maintaining symbolic capital does not necessarily mean that its entirety is expressed. Gregory of Tours, for example, does not connect either the duration of a king’s reign or his hair to his *fortuna*, his ‘Heil’, or any similar conception. Rather, he describes any cutting of royal hair in an emotional language. Chararic, to recall the early example, and his son lament not the loss of their royalty, but rather the humiliation (*humilitas*) that they have suffered. It is possible, however, that the emotional language selected by Gregory conceals Merovingian perceptions of their own power.

The function of the traditional Merovingian hairstyle is mirrored not only in the different practices that surrounded it, but also by an analysis of the discourse employed for it. Gregory, in telling the story about the weeping Chararic and the difficult decision of queen Chlothild, confirms the symbolic capital of the Merovingians’ hair. In his Histories Gregory often took a critical view of individual Merovingian kings. For Gundovald, the luckless pretender, he had a certain sympathy—as he had for Merovech, the son of Chilperic, who was described as weeping bitterly as he sat before the altar of the church of St Martin, reading the Book of Kings. Guntram is also generally presented in a positive light, but Chilperic is described by Gregory as a ‘Nero’ and a ‘Herod’.135

At Berny-Rivière Gregory in fact found himself in some difficulty. His rival Riculf may well have come across a copy of Gregory’s work during his time at Tours. “Berny-Rivière must have taught Gregory that gossip, when it could be construed as slander, was dangerous.”136 This example also illustrates the fact that in a text the depiction of the king was of great importance, regardless of whether it was composed in the royal circle or even at a royal command. Between an exhortative ‘mirror’ and a text that was truly critical there could exist a number of different attitudes vis-à-vis the king, who himself had a certain amount of space in which to position himself. Control of narrative should not, therefore, be limited to the active intervention of kings alone; Gregory could in fact describe Chilperic as a ‘Nero’ and ‘Herod’ only after his death.

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136 Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, p. 17. See also Helmut Reimitz in this volume.
This type of defamation, as well as longer accounts of errors or evil deeds by rivals, served as a propagandistic tool in texts. However, as Philippe Buc has shown in multiple examples, the same is true for the qualities of ritual, whether friendly or adverse.\(^{137}\) Reports of cutting royal hair must therefore be judged in the context of textual composition, and it is the steadfastness of royal hair as a social symbol that made it so well suited in texts to express a position or programme—or even to release ‘social energy’, in that it could evoke an emotional reaction in the reader.\(^{138}\)

The great humiliation of a forced tonsure could reinforce the defeat of a rival in a text, even as the opposite is also true: the suppression or relativization of this event could play down an unpleasant historical memory. The Liber Historiae Francorum, for example, written in 727, reports that after the death of Chlothar III his brother Theuderic became king. The Franks, however, set a trap for Ebroin, the Mayor of the Palace, initially capturing both him and Theuderic. The hair of both was then cut: crinesque capitis amborum vi abstrahentes.\(^{139}\)

We are not told the name of the place in which Theuderic took refuge, but we find that Ebroin was exiled to Luxeuil.

An alternative description of these events can be found in the virtually contemporary Passio Leudegarii prima (written in the 680s).\(^{140}\) According to this source, the great men of the kingdom violently cut off the hair of their lord Theuderic, in order to avoid a blood bath. They then led him before his brother Childeric, who asked him what treatment he wished: quid de se age vellet.\(^{141}\) Scholars have traditionally placed this account alongside the above-mentioned episode from Gregory’s Decem Libri Historiarum (III, 8), asserting that it demonstrated that the cutting of hair was not necessarily motivated by an


\(^{139}\) Liber Historiae Francorum 45, p. 317.


\(^{141}\) Passio prima Leudegarii I, 6, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SS rerum Meroving 1977 icarum 5 (Hannover and Leipzig 1910) p. 288: ... tune quidam, qui in regno videbant esse primarii et Childericum cupiebant a caede adulando placare crinem sui domini temeritatis auso iussertini ampulare, sicque fratru suo eum studuerunt praesentare.
ecclesiastical urge.\textsuperscript{142} However, the work of Gerberding and Fouracre has shown that the first version of the \textit{Passio Leudegarii prima} was composed at a time when Theuderic had already returned to power.\textsuperscript{143} This may well have been the reason why the author selected this depiction, which while not turning a blind eye to the event at least presented it in a rather mild light. It is in this sense that we might also understand Theuderic’s response to his brother, “that he had been unjustly cast down from the throne, and he declared that he was anticipating a swift judgement from God in his favour.”\textsuperscript{144} After being shorn Theuderic was brought to Saint-Denis, where he—as the \textit{Passio} is careful to point out immediately after the account of his humiliation—allowed his hair to grow again.

The \textit{Liber Historiae Francorum}, which includes only a brief mention of these events, employed the image of the royal hair in a different way. The anonymous author, like Gregory, had his favourite royals: Clovis I, Chlothar II, Dagobert I. These three kings all managed not only to conquer neighbouring lands, but reigned alone for substantial periods of time.\textsuperscript{145} Another king presented in positive terms was Childebert III,\textsuperscript{146} who served as a model of how to rule “in conjunction and in council with his leading \textit{Franci}”.\textsuperscript{147} The \textit{Liber Historiae Francorum} was composed around 727 in either Saint-Denis or Soissons, and preserves a perspective which is not only secular but oriented toward the Merovingians. During a time when the Carolingians were firmly in control it created a history where the Merovingian family alone, with the support of the great, ruled the kingdom,\textsuperscript{148} and with the proximity of the author to the Merovingian kings the text becomes at least indirectly a product of a Merovingian imagination—in this case that of Theuderic IV, who in fact had issued charters in Soissons.\textsuperscript{149} In this situation the long hair of the kings takes on a

\textsuperscript{142} Vgl. Sprigade, “Abschneiden des Königshaares”, p. 156.
\textsuperscript{143} P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding, \textit{Late Merovingian France. History and Hagiography, 640–720} (Manchester and New York 1996) p. 202: “Here the constraining factor could simply have been Theuderic himself, for he lived on as king until at least 690.”
\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Passio Leudegarii I}, 6, p. 288: \textit{ille vero hoc solum, eo quod inuiste fuerat de loco regni detectus, inditium sibi a Deo celerem expectare professus.}
\textsuperscript{145} Vgl. Fouracre, “Merovingian history”, p. 30, n. 98.
\textsuperscript{146} \textit{Liber Historiae Francorum} 49 and 50, pp. 323–325.
\textsuperscript{147} Gerberding, \textit{The Rise of the Carolingians}, p. 162.
\textsuperscript{148} Gerberding, \textit{The Rise of the Carolingians}, p. 159.
representative role it did not have to assume in either Fredegar or Gregory of Tours. The contrast to Fredegar is a clear one, as the following example shows.

Fredegar's *Chronicae* have a great deal to say about Chlothar and Dagobert, but do not mention their campaign against the Saxons. The *Liber Historiae Francorum*, in contrast, reports that king Dagobert marched out with his army against the rebellious Saxons. Once in battle, however, he encountered difficulties. He was struck on the helmet by a sword, and a lock of his hair fell to the ground. The king, who recognized that he was on his way to losing the battle, sent a messenger with this lock of hair to his father, hoping to obtain help. After the emissary had appeared before Chlothar with Dagobert's lock of hair, Chlothar was deeply concerned—and hurried off that very night with his army to the aid of his son. When the fresh Frankish forces arrived on the field, the Franks applauded—a noise heard by the Saxon army, encamped on the other side of a river. When the Saxon duke Bertoald asked what was happening on the other bank, he was told that Chlothar had arrived. Bertoald, however, cursed his informants, named them cowards, and claimed that Chlothar was dead. "But the king was standing there, dressed in his leather breastplate, helmet on his head, and his long hair, bespeckled with gray, bound up." When Chlothar removed his helmet the Saxons recognized him, and their duke abused the king: *tu hilaras, bale iumente?* Chlothar was angered by this mockery, and Bertoald and he fought one to one—a conflict from which the king emerged victorious.

Both the drama of single combat and the space dedicated to the scene by the anonymous author creates a textual character that is virtually epic. Chlothar's removal of his helmet before the Saxon host, revealing his long grey hair, forms the only textual passage characterizing the traditional Merovingian hairstyle that is not connected to the cutting of hair. The entire scene underlines the importance of kingly hair, and the exceptional character of its inclusion in the *Liber historiae Francorum* is substantiated by a later source. According to the *Vita Faronis*, composed by Bishop Hildegar of Meaux in 869, the victory of Chlothar over the Saxons was remembered in a *carmen publicum iuxta rusticitatem*. Hildegar records only the beginning

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151 *Vita Faronis episcopi Meldensis* 78, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SS rerum Merovingicarum
and final lines of this song, whose date of composition is controversial.\textsuperscript{152} Hildegar in fact oriented his text on the \textit{Liber Historiae Francorum}, but it is notable that in the ninth century we find evidence that an educated elite cultivated interest in a ‘Germanic’ past.\textsuperscript{153} Whoever the author of the \textit{carmen} may have been, he recognized the epic-poetic character of Chlothar’s Saxon campaign, either out of the \textit{Liber Historiae Francorum} or from an independent tradition. For an author who stood near the Merovingians and who may have had a Merovingian audience, this epic portrait of the last two independent Merovingian kings would have been a welcome memory. The important role assigned to the royal hair in this episode shows that, in a time when the Merovingians had little power, it was especially important to them that their hair, the symbol of their independence, could be renewed.

Approximately one hundred years after the \textit{Liber Historiae Francorum} and roughly 25 years before the \textit{Vita Faronis} was written, the episode of Chlothar’s and Dagobert’s battle against the Saxons reappeared.

In the early thirties of the ninth century, the \textit{Gesta Dagoberti} were composed by an anonymous author.\textsuperscript{154} The author attempted to elevate the founder of Saint-Denis; his goal was to demonstrate that the monastery was a royal one and was not subject to episcopal authority. He made heavy use of Fredegar, whose text (in contrast to the \textit{Liber Historiae Francorum}) rather reflected a Carolingian perspective. The author seems to have recognized the special preference of the \textit{Liber Historiae Francorum} for Chlothar II and Dagobert, and so selected a chapter from the \textit{Liber Historiae Francorum} for his characterization of the two kings. In this passage, the authority of

\textsuperscript{5} (Hannover and Leipzig 1910) pp. 171-203, here: 193: \textit{Ex qua victoria carmen publicum iuxta rusticitatem per omnium paene voluit ab ore ita canentium, feminaque choros inde plaudendo componerant: De Chlothario est canere rege Francorum, Qui iuit pugnare in gentem Saxonom, Quam grave provenisset missis Saxonom, Si non suisset incitatus Faro de gente Burgundionum. Et in fine huius carminis: Quando veniunt missi Saxonom in terra Francorum, Faro ubi erat princeps, Instinctu Dei transiunt per urbem Meldorum, Ne interficiantur a rege Francorum.}


two Merovingian kings, Chlothar and Dagobert, was articulated by a variety of symbols, including their hair.\textsuperscript{155}

The depiction of royal hair in the Saxon campaign was, however, not the only such portrait in the \textit{Gesta}. We are told that king Chlothar relied upon a man by the name of Sadregisel to administrate his kingdom, in particular the Duchy of Aquitaine. Sadregisel supposedly abused this trust, and himself desired the kingship. This desire led him into conflict with Dagobert, the son of Chlothar. But, when Sadregisel openly mocked Dagobert, the prince had him seized, beaten and his beard shaved.\textsuperscript{156} The humiliated nobleman in turn complained to the king, who summoned his son to account for himself. Dagobert subsequently fled to Saint-Denis.\textsuperscript{157} Although he was closely pursued, his would-be captors were unable to come within a mile of his sanctuary,\textsuperscript{158} and when Chlothar himself attempted to enter the refuge he was rooted to the ground.\textsuperscript{159} Only after the royal anger had abated and Chlothar had been reconciled with his son was he able to enter the church of the saints Dionysius, Rusticus, and Eleutherius, Dagobert's sanctuary. Chlothar then chose these saints to be his particular patrons.\textsuperscript{160}

As Bruno Krusch recognized, the figure of Sadregisel has no historical referent.\textsuperscript{161} Both Max Buchner and Leon Levillain, however, have suggested different identities for the figures involved in this episode.\textsuperscript{162} According to Buchner, Sadregisel embodies Bernhard of Septimania, Chlothar Emperor Louis the Pious, and Dagobert his son Pippin. In fact, after the division of the Empire Pippin received the southwestern portion of the Empire; Dagobert, according to the \textit{Gesta Dagoberti}, had similarly been awarded Aquitaine as a sub-kingdom.\textsuperscript{163} The sharpest opponent of Pippin in Italy was indeed Bernhard

\textsuperscript{155} \textit{Gesta Dagoberti} 14, pp. 404f.
\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Gesta Dagoberti} 6, pp. 402f.
\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Gesta Dagoberti} 7, p. 403.
\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Gesta Dagoberti} 8, p. 403.
\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Gesta Dagoberti} 10, p. 404.
\textsuperscript{160} \textit{Gesta Dagoberti} 11, p. 404.
\textsuperscript{161} B. Krusch, "Über die \textit{Gesta Dagoberti}", \textit{Forschungen zur deutschen Geschichte} 26 (1886) p. 187.
\textsuperscript{163} Cf., however, the differing identifications of the protagonists by Buchner and Levillain.
of Septimania. The historical background of the account thus appears to mirror the rebellion of 830, when Pippin first stood up against Louis the Pious. Leivillain, on the other hand, finds in this narrative a portrayal of the events of the year 833. This portion of the text can therefore be construed as an acute political statement, and one element of the symbolic language used is the shaving of a beard to humiliate an opponent (c. 6).

Reference is made both to this humiliation and to shaving later in the Gesta. To justify both the beating and the shaving inflicted by Dagobert on Sadregisel, the author asserts that Sadregisel’s crimes were notable—an opinion that the Chlothar of the Gesta, at least, does not seem initially to share. To inflict this form of humiliation on an opponent was, therefore, in a programmatic (or constructed) text from the thirties of the ninth century, a believable cause for conflict within the royal family. This symbolic treatment thus does not appear to be appropriate for everyone, or in all situations. In 830, if the connection is correct, empress Judith’s brothers (Conrad and Rodulf) had their hair cut and were sent into a monastery.

The Annales regni Francorum use the image of hair-cutting for three of the most important political decisions of the eighth century. When Carlloman, the brother of Pippin, retired to Monte Cassino in 747 they report in the entry for that year: Tunc Carlomannus Romam perrexit ibique se totondit. Furthermore, it is mentioned that he withdrew into his own foundation at Monte Soraeta. Four years later, only a brief description is provided for the transfer of the crown in 751, ending with a description of Childeric III’s fate: Hildericus vero, qui false rex vocabatur, tonsoratus est, et in monasterium missus. This is a rather harsh

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165 Gesta Dagoberti 35, pp. 413f.
167 See Annales Bertiniani a. 830, p. 2.
170 Annales regni Francorum a. 750, pp. 8–10.
depiction of this event. Although tonsuring is described in both passages, a notable distinction is made between voluntary and involuntary tonsuring. Yet a third possibility can be found in the Royal Frankish Annals in the entry for the year 788, where a *licentia* appears; it was given to Duke Tassilo *sibi tonsorand* *et in monasterio introuendi et pro tantis peccatis paenitentiam agendi et ut suam salvaret animam.*

Other contemporary sources show how the events that took place in 788 at Ingelheim can be understood as a humiliation. A row of ‘minor’ annals, which supposedly derived from the so-called Murbach Annals, offer a perspective that differs from that of the ‘official’ *Annales regni Francorum*—although they do not directly contradict the official account, the monks in Murbach seem to have had access to good information on local events.

A manuscript which contains one of these minor annals, the *Annales Nazariani,* was written at Murbach and preserved in the cloister St Nazarius in Lorsch (Codex Palatinus latinus 966 is now preserved in the Vatican). In these annals Carloman’s retreat to Monte Cassino is not mentioned, and the dramatic removal of the last Merovingian from throne is presented without mentioning the cutting of his hair. Significant space is dedicated, however, to Bavarian events. In the manuscript the events of the years 787/788 are distinguished even graphically from the other years’ entries. The Annals report for the year 787 that a sceptre on which a man was carved was given to Charlemagne by Tassilo, a report which supports the assumption of privileged knowledge in Murbach, as it is found nowhere else. Great attention is given to the events of 788; it is said that Tassilo was seized and disarmed, robbed of his personal standard

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171 *Annales regni Francorum* a. 788, p. 80.


173 Codex Vaticanus Pal.lat. 966, fol. 57r–59v.

and led before the assembly. He then sent messengers to his wife, after arriving at Ingelheim, who commanded both her and his children to come to him. The zealous messengers, however, brought not only Tassilo’s immediate family but also other relations, servants, and many valuables. Tassilo seems to have obeyed or been forced to obey all of these Carolingian demands, and was successful in only a single plea: his final humiliation, the cutting of his hair, would not take place in public. He did not wish to be given up to public scorn and mockery, *propter confusiolem videlicet atque obprobium, quod a Francis habere videbatur*.

In later years the Carolingians would not grant such a plea. The public performance of power and public imposition of a humiliation was a powerful method of minimizing the symbolic capital of an opponent and to increase one’s own. It was at the Aachen *placitum* in 818, for example, that Louis the Pious’ half-brothers (Drogo, Hugo, and Theoderic) all had their hair cut. Charles, the brother of king Pippin of Aquitaine, was tonsured in 849 at a West-Frankish *placitum* at Chartres. In 788, however, there seems to have been no desire to increase the pressure on Tassilo beyond the breaking point. It in fact appears likely that Tassilo had his hair cut at St Goar. The ‘official’ version reported by the Royal Frankish Annals also states that he was allowed to cut his hair himself. What is notable in these cases is the great importance assigned to the public act of cutting. The *Annales Nazariani*, although they alone consider the transfer of a type of sceptre, portray the public shaving of the hair as the only humiliation to which Tassilo does not submit. Evidently then, the hair was for him a more crucial symbol of his status than the sceptre.

The *Chronicon Laurissense*, written at Lorsch, mentions Tassilo only briefly if at all. It is simply stated that Tassilo was pronounced guilty

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175 Annales Nazariani a. 788, p. 163.

176 Lendi, Untersuchungen, p. 79.


178 Nithard, *Historiae I*, 2, ed. Ph. Lauer, Les Classiques de l’Histoire de France au Moyen Age Fas. 7 (Paris 1926) p. 8: *ad conventum publicum eos venire precepit, toton- ditae ac per monastera sub libera custodia commendavit*.


of infidelitas, tonsured, and sent to a monastery. It is interesting that in Lorsch two different points of view were preserved. The other monasteries, which most certainly knew just as well about the events at Ingelheim, chose also to follow the official version of the Royal Frankish Annals in their portrayal: even Fulda, which had close contact to the Bavarian duke in particular through the figure of Sturmi. This reinforces again how unique the perspective of the Annales Nazariani from Murbach was.

Years later Einhard opened his Vita Karoli magni with a description of the Merovingian kings—his contribution to the preservation of the memory of the former royal family. As has often been pointed out, Einhard's description represents the core of anti-Merovingian propaganda. In Einhard's own words, "nothing [was] ... left to the king, but to sit on the throne, with his flowing hair and long beard, and pretend to rule, satisfied only with the royal name ..." The importance of presenting an image of rois fainéants is, however, underlined by the fact that a Vita Karoli, composed in the early thirties of the ninth century, needed to open with the Merovingians at all.

The tonsure of Childeric, the last Merovingian, is reported by Einhard in rather bald terms. However, for his description of the tonsure of Carloman, and even that of Tassilo, Einhard chose to employ different imagery to characterize their withdrawal from the secular world:

Carloman then relinquished the heavy burden of administering a temporal kingdom and went off to Rome in search of peace, exactly for what reasons it is not known, but apparently because he was fired by a love of the contemplative life. He changed his dress, became a monk, built a monastery on Monte Soratte beside the church of Saint Sylvester, and there, in the company of the brethren who had come to join him for the same reason, enjoyed for some years the peace for which he longed.

The fall of Tassilo is mentioned only briefly: "Tassilo was summoned to the king's presence and was not allowed to go back home

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182 Einhard, Vita Karoli 1, p. 3: Neque regi alius relinquebatur, quam ut regio tantum nomine contentus crine profuso, barba sumissa, solio resideret ac speciem dominantis effingeret ...
183 Einhard, Vita Karoli 1, p. 3. See Ian Wood in this volume.
184 Einhard, Vita Karoli 1, pp. 3f.
The image of hair cutting seems to have been reserved by Einhard for the Merovingians alone. As Mayke de Jong pointed out: "... all that happened ... was done by force."186

The different treatment accorded to the these three eighth-century events is also reflected in the so-called Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi, which stand in a not fully-explained relationship to Einhard’s Vita. While the Annales regni Francorum present the fates of all three men in the same conceptual terms, even if these terms imply different treatments, the Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi connect the image of the tonsure only to the last Merovingian king. It appears that the compiler of these annals sought to reduce the Merovingians to their most prominent attribute, which he then promptly deconstructed: hair itself was free to be mocked, as hair and beards appear either in a context of wild disarray or of cutting187—even as the hair of Charlemagne himself is only briefly mentioned and the allusion to the Merovingians’ hair is carefully avoided: canitie pulchra. This phrase was never used to describe the hair of the Merovingians, but originates, like the other parts of the description of Charlemagne, from Suetonius.188 The portrayal of the Merovingians’ hair, though, is probably modelled on a passage of Tacitus’ Germania.189

Punishment is apparently the context evoked by Notker Balbulus in his Gesta Karoli, when he described the transfer of the crown in 751; he wrote that Pope Stephen had “... anointed [Pippin] ... at the time when Childeric, that most cowardly king of the Franks, had been deposed and had his hair shorn ...”.190 This is the passage to which Carolingian eyes were meant to turn.

On the other hand, long hair was also associated with hermits and ascetics,191 a religious category that steadily lost prestige under the

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185 Einhard, Vita Karoli 11, p. 11: Tassilo tenen postmodum ad regem evocatus, neque redire permissus.
189 Einhart, Vita Karoli 1, p. 3: ... crine profuso, barba summissa ... See Tacitus, Germania 31, p. 32; Maniu, “Einheits Werke”, p. 527.
Carolingians. For instance, Sulpicius Severus said that Martin was *crine deformis*.\(^{192}\) Again the case of the recluse Leobardus comes to mind. Rather, it was the *stabilitas loci* prescribed by the *Regula Benedicti* that the Carolingians considered to be of vital importance.\(^{193}\) In a capitulary of March 23, 789, it was even said that it would be better for anchorites to remain in *congregatione*, for *quam animus eorum alibi ambulare temptet*.\(^{194}\) In the year 802 a *Capitulare missorum generale* prohibited monks from leaving the grounds of their monasteries—and if they had to, they were required to obtain the permission (*licentia*) of the bishop and their abbot.\(^{195}\) The issue of hair was discussed at the council of Aachen in 816, where the tonsure was regulated, such that monks were required to shave their heads every fifteen days.\(^{196}\)

These ordinances found their echoes in the Carolingian *Vita Eparchii*. In this *Vita* we are told of a certain Arthemius, who—although not a cleric—withdrawed and became a hermit. Following several years of solitude his hair had grown very long and he had been possessed by a demon, who in turn convinced him that he had to visit king Childebert *et quod minus facultas donaretur, eius regni viribus exploraret*.\(^{197}\) When his parents finally noticed that their son was no longer in full possession of his faculties, they decided to bring their ailing son to St Eparchius. Pretending to set out to visit the king, it was not until they arrived before the city that Arthemius (or rather his demon) noticed the deceit. Arthemius was enraged, and had to be tied to a horse with his hands bound. Upon entering the city the berserk began to toss his hair wildly,\(^{198}\) but as the travellers approached Eparchius he calmed (c. 16). On the following day Arthemius had his hair cut *more laico*, drawing out desperate cries from the demon. Arthemius then entered the Church, and after being fully cured became a deacon. He remained healthy for the rest of his life.


\(^{194}\) *Duplex legationis dictum*, p. 63.

\(^{195}\) *Capitulare missorum generale* 17, MGH Legum Sectio 2. Capitularia regum Francorum 1, ed. A. Boretius (Hannover 1883) pp. 91–99, here: 94f.


\(^{197}\) *Vita et virtutes Eparchii reclusi Ecclismensis* 15, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SS rerum Merovingicarum 3 (Hannover 1896) p. 557.

\(^{198}\) *Vita Eparchii* 15, p. 557: *Quo intromissa, coepit crinibus concuti et pludere se sanctitatis comparere non habere.*
This episode is of interest in that St Eparchius himself wished to live a solitary life, in particular after his reputation as a miracle worker had spread and he wished to escape his home monastery. A suitable desert in Angoulême was offered by the bishop there, but the saint first obtained the permission of his own bishop and that of his abbot before setting out. Only after Eparchius had received the necessary permission and been ordained a priest did he retire to this *reclusio*, where he in any case lived surrounded by other people.

The *Vita Eparchii* illustrates the politically correct solitary life. Its central figure, St Eparchius, first proved himself in a monastery and did not attempt to set off on his own without obtaining the permission of both his bishop and his abbot. The negative, contrasting image is formed by Arthemius, who withdrew into the desert without being himself a priest. There he was not only possessed by a demon but dared an attempt to lecture a king; it was this attempt that was a particularly undesirable behaviour in the Carolingian world.

Alcuin also “corrected” individual images of kings in the *Vita Vedastis*, the *Vita Richarii*, and the *Versus de patribus et sanctis Euboicensis Ecclesiae*, altering passages where kings did not appear autocratic enough. The Carolingian *correctio*, however, did not confine itself to a new definition of the relationship between saint and king. It made similar efforts to approach other social themes. The case of the *Vita Eparchii* makes clear what other social structures were in transformation, as were the signs and symbols that surrounded them: Arthemius’ long hair was no longer a sign of his strength, but of his weakness.

It was conceivable, in a Carolingian *vita*, to describe long hair as the particular home of a demon, a context that fit snugly into efforts to create a negative image of the Merovingians. Merovingian weakness could still be recalled in the tenth century, when the author of the *Vita Dagoberti III. regis Francorum* described a dream of the king. In this dream, the king was instructed by St Gereon to return plundered goods, and after waking the king had both his nails and his hair cut. From that time on neither man nor animal supposedly

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dared enter the royal chambers; those who attempted to sickened or even died.200

Both a beard and the hair of the head offer limited possibilities of arrangement. As, however, traditional hairstyles were assigned multiple meanings in different contextual spaces, whether ethnographical, monastic, social, or otherwise, they necessarily created multiple competing meanings if not ambivalence. Robert Bartlett, among other scholars, has pointed out these "shifts or clashes of contemporary understanding".201 The intersection of meanings created a plurality of possible beliefs, a plurality that does not always allow clear separations to be made between different traditions. In the relevant clauses of the Lex Salica, as can be shown, different symbolic meanings assigned to the ritual cutting of the hair do not necessarily conflict with each other. This fact makes clear that there is no need to assume that a 'Germanic' ritual described by Tacitus survived among the early Franks; in contrast, the 'rite of passage' employed in the Carolingian era conforms more closely to supposedly 'Germanic' customs than that of the early Merovingian age. For this reason, any study of Merovingian hair cannot rest on sources mentioning royal hair alone, but must take in other examples as well. Specific ways of wearing the hair, as well as the practice of hair-cutting, do not apply to the Merovingians alone, but to multiple groups within the Frankish people.

Although the long hair of the Merovingians was an exclusive symbol, the meaning of this symbol only reveals itself during comparison to other references to hair appearing in contemporary texts. Furthermore, concepts of sacral legitimation, 'Königsheil', royal 'fortune', and magic should not be brought to bear on this symbol. These models have been revealed to be of little use in descriptions of the function and meaning of the long hair of the Merovingians. Instead, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of "symbolic capital" may be employed, allowing as it does the various differentiations created within social space to be described. The concept of honour, often used to explain motivations of actions—for example, Queen Chlothild's decision to have grandsons slain—is a useful hypothesis for interpretation, and can also be integrated into Bourdieu's model. Symbolic capital itself could be increased by different events, events that in

200 Vgl. Graus, Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger, p. 404.
201 Bartlett, "Symbolic meanings of hair", p. 58; Pohl, "Telling the difference".
turn increased the meaning of the Merovingian royal hairstyle. Cutting of the hair remained, among other things, a very emotional act—whether as a display of the power of the hair cutter or the victim's experience of weakness.

To understand fully the long hair of the Merovingian kings, we must examine not only practices of hair cutting, but also the context of the sources that report those practices. The texts that reported the cutting of hair had different goals, and in the spirit of Philippe Buc we can assert that hair-cutting was not only a "political ritual" but opened the question of "narrative technique".202 We thus find the *Liber historiae Francorum* presenting a brief account of Theuderic's tonsure, while the *Passio Leudegarii*, preserving in one sense the king's own perspective, downplays the event. Similar variation can be found in the Royal Frankish Annals, where the cutting of the hair of Carloman, Childeric, and Tassilo is described in different terms. While the last Merovingian is clearly humiliated, Tassilo was granted the *licentia* to cut his hair in secret. It is thus the control of narrative that allows Tassilo's humiliation to be expressed in a gentler form.

The hairstyle of the Merovingian kings has to be examined from multiple viewpoints. Although "long-haired Kings" may have taken up a symbolical language originating in the pagan past, the practices connected with cutting of the hair could be interpreted in both legal and ecclesiastical contexts. It is thus difficult to determine into which world of imagination the cutting of royal hair should be placed, and it will probably be impossible to ever make a clear distinction between "pagan" and "christian" elements in this sphere.

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202 Buc, "Political Ritual"; id., *The Dangers of Ritual*.