Der Dynastiewechsel von 751

Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien
und Erinnerung

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Pippin III as Mayor of the Palace: the Evidence

1. Establishing the outline of events

Any study of the years from 741 to 751, in which Pippin III exercised the office of Mayor of the Palace, depends upon the evidence of a small number of relatively brief narrative sources, that are marked by their mutual disagreements. Identifying these texts is easy but evaluating them is quite a different matter. The source that is probably closest in date to the decade in question is one discrete section of the Continuations of the Chronicle of Fredegar. This is the part of the text that ends in what all modern editions call chapter 33, by giving a brief account of how Pippin came to be made king of the Franks. Although not here explicitly dated, the internal chronology of the work seems to locate this event in the year 751, and there are good grounds for believing that this section of the Continuations was written not long after Pippin's royal inauguration, and may even have been compiled with the intention of celebrating it.¹

Exactly where the starting point for this section of the work should be placed is a debatable question, and depends upon the view taken of the number of discrete continuations of the original chronicle that may be believed to exist. The interpretation that has been generally accepted since the first major analysis of the text, published by Bruno Krusch in 1882, is that there are five changes of authorship to be detected within the Continuations.² In his edition of 1888 these would correspond to chapters one to ten, eleven to seventeen, eighteen to twenty one, twenty two to thirty three, and thirty four to fifty four.³ More recently it has been suggested that the only significant division is that lying between the first thirty three chapters, which may have resulted from an act of compilation performed around the year 751, and the remaining twenty one chapters, which belong to a second continuation made after 768 and possibly as late as the 780s.⁴

These arguments are not a matter of immediate concern here, as none of the suggested changes in the authorship or compositional history of the work have ever been thought to fall within the span of chapters twenty four to thirty three, which are the ones that relate to the events of the years 741 to 751. Instead, it may be said that this source thus provides an apparently contemporary, or very near contemporary, account of the events of the decade in question, and might therefore be expected to constitute the evidential starting point for any study of the period. But, for a variety of reasons, this text can not be allowed to stand alone, and its narrative needs to be compared with that provided by other, albeit later, annalistic compilations. Of these the best known and most significant is, of course, the so-called Annales Regni Francorum (henceforth ARF).

Great weight is usually attached to the testimony of this source, because it has long been seen as something akin to an official compilation, composed and extended at the courts of Charlemagne and of his son Louis the Pious. If this be the case, it can only be true of the section of the work covering the years from 793 onwards. The opening section of the work, consisting of its annals for 741 to 788, was probably compiled at some point between the latter date and 793, from sources that can not be identified. Some of its testimony to the events of 741 to 751 may therefore derive from otherwise lost contemporary sources, but this can not be proved.

When the accounts of these years in the Continuations of Fredegar and in ARF are compared, a number of significant differences emerge. Amongst the earliest of the events whose description is affected by the divergence in their testimony is the crucial division of the Frankish territories between Pippin and Carloman. In the Continuations this was said to have been carried out by their father, Charles Martel, either in 741 or before, while in ARF the two brothers are described as dividing up the territories themselves, in 742, in the course of a joint campaign in Aquitaine.

This expedition is mentioned in both texts, but a subsequent campaign against the Alamans in the autumn of 742 is differently reported, with the Continuations making it a joint operation by both Mayors, and ARF assigning responsibility for it to Carloman alone. In 743 both sources agree that a joint expedition was undertaken against the

6 Annales regni Francorum, ed. F. KURZE, MGH SS rer. Germ. [6], Hanover 1895, V-VIII.
7 Fredegar, Chronicæ cont. c. 23, ed. KRUSCH (cf. note 3) 179, and ed. WALLACE-HADRIEL (cf. note 1) 97; Annales regni Francorum a. 742, ed. KURZE (cf. note 6) 4. The version given in the Continuations is followed by the author of the Breviarium attributed to Erchanbert, which was probably written in St. Gallen around 827: ed. G. H. PERTZ, MGH SS 2, Hanover 1829, 328.
Bavarians, but it is only ARF that mentions a campaign conducted by Carloman against the Saxons later the same year.\(^8\)

For 744 ARF records that both brothers undertook an expedition into Saxony, but the Continuations depict Carloman as fighting in Saxony, while Pippin besieged Theudobald, son of the Alaman duke Godafred in an unnamed location in the Alps.\(^9\)

In its annals for 745 and 746, ARF makes no mention of any military activity; instead it reports in its entry for the first of these years that Carloman told his brother of his desire *seculum relinquere*, and in the second it describes how he departed for Rome and built a monastery dedicated to St. Sylvester.\(^10\)

The Continuations paint a rather different picture of these two years, stating that in 745 there was a joint expedition by Pippin and Carloman into Aquitaine, and that in 746 Carloman conducted a campaign against the Alamans, in which many of them were killed. No mention is made of any military action undertaken by Pippin in this latter year. It is only in the section that corresponds to the year 747 that the Continuations describe Carloman's handing over of his *regnum una cum filio suo Drogone* to Pippin and his departure for Rome to become a monk.\(^11\) This is followed by a short account of a Saxon revolt, that was suppressed later the same year by Pippin, aided by the kings of the Wends and of the Frisians.

Concerning this Frankish expedition into Saxony in 747, ARF provides more detail. The annal for this year begins by reporting that Pippin's half-brother Grifo, of whom no mention was made in the Continuations, fled into Saxony. In consequence, Pippin entered Saxony via Thuringia, establishing himself at a place called *Scabaningi*, while Grifo and the Saxons gathered at *Orbaim*. No outcome of this confrontation is described by ARF, and no mention is made of Wendish or Frisian support for Pippin.\(^12\)

In the ARF annal for 748 there occur some abrupt transitions in the events described, with few explanations being given of how let alone why they occurred. The narrative begins with Grifo leaving Saxony, for reasons that are not explained, and conquering Bavaria with the aid of a certain Swidger. However, both he and the Alaman duke Lanfrid are then said to have been captured by Pippin, who installed Tassilo as the new ruler of the Bavarians. Grifo was subsequently given twelve Neustrian

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\(^8\) Fredegar, Chronicae cont. c. 25f., ed. KRUSCH (cf. note 3) 180, and ed. WALLACE-HADRILL (cf. note 1) 98f.; Annales regni Francorum a. 742f., ed. KURZE (cf. note 6) 4.

\(^9\) Fredegar, Chronicae cont. c. 27, ed. KRUSCH (cf. note 3) 180f., and ed. WALLACE-HADRILL (cf. note 1) 99f.; Annales regni Francorum a. 744, ed. KURZE (cf. note 6) 4.

\(^10\) Annales regni Francorum a. 745f., ed. KURZE (cf. note 6) 4 and 6.

\(^11\) Fredegar, Chronicae cont. c. 30, ed. KRUSCH (cf. note 3) 181, and ed. WALLACE-HADRILL (cf. note 1) 100f. This account was followed by Erchanbert, Breviarium, ed. PERTZ (cf. note 7) 328.

\(^12\) Annales regni Francorum a. 747, ed. KURZE (cf. note 6) 6.
counties by his half-brother, but before the end of the year he had fled to Wasconia, i.e. Aquitaine, to take refuge with the Aquitanian duke Waiofar.  

The Continuations omit several of the episodes mentioned in ARF in its annal for 748, but on the other hand they provide rather more detail on the military dimensions of Pippin's campaign in Bavaria. The cause of this expedition is described as being a Bavarian revolt, and, as in previous sections, no mention is made of Grifo. Faced by Pippin encamped on the banks of the river Inn and preparing for a navale proelium, the Bavarians are reported to have submitted to him without further resistance. At which point Pippin is said to have returned to Francia in triumph and 'the land had peace for two years.' For the succeeding three years this section of the Continuations only refers, under the chronologically vague quo tempore to Pippin's sending of an embassy to Rome and his ensuing election and consecration as king.  

ARF concurs in not mentioning any military activity in its annals for 749 and 750, and instead devotes them respectively to the embassy of bishop Burchard and abbot Fulrad to pope Zacharias and to the latter's instruction that Pippin should be made king. This is followed by the latter's election secundum morem Francorum and his anointing as king by Boniface at Soissons. The incarceration of his Merovingian predecessor Childeric, qui false rex vocabatur, in a monastery is mentioned here, but not in the Continuations.  

Overall, while there are points at which preference can clearly be given to the account of one source or the other, and several exist on which they both concur, neither can be regarded as being more consistently reliable. In part this stems from the fact that both compilers were acting under various constraints in the construction of their narratives. It is clear, for example, that the author of the Fredegar Continuations wished to avoid any mention of Grifo. This made it very difficult for him to present a proper account of the events that took place in Saxony in 747 and in Bavaria in 748, in both of which Grifo played a central role. Similarly, he seems unwilling to refer to the existence of the Merovingian king Childeric. In like fashion, ARF seems to have wished to avoid any reference to Pippin and Carloman's sister Chiltrudis, who had eloped with the Bavarian duke Odilo in 742, or to Carloman's son Drogo, both of whom are mentioned openly in the Continuations. It can also be said that in general, but with the exception of the years 745 and 746, ARF is more fully informed than

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13 Annales regni Francorum a. 748, ed. KURZE (cf. note 6) 6-8.
14 Fredegar, Chronicae cont. c. 31f., ed. KRUŞCH (cf. note 3) 181f., and ed. WALLACE-HADRILL (cf. note 1) 101f.
15 Annales regni Francorum a. 749-751, ed. KURZE (cf. note 6) 8 and 10.
16 For Chiltrudis's flight to Bavaria see Fredegar, Chronicae cont. c. 25, ed. KRUŞCH (cf. note 3) 180, and ed. WALLACE-HADRILL (cf. note 1) 98; and for Drogo, Ibid. c. 30, ed. WALLACE-HADRILL (cf. note 1) 100f.
the Continuations about events to the east of the Rhine, while the latter is a better source for what was happening in Burgundy and northern Aquitaine.

There are also some obvious gaps in the material available to, or thought appropriate for inclusion by, the two compilers. This is particularly noticeable in the case of ARF, which seems strangely ill informed about the years 745 and 746, predating Carloman's abdication by a year, and then extending its account of that event over the two annals. In the same way, the annalist filled in the years 749 and 750 with his account of Burchard's embassy to Rome and Pippin's ensuing royal inauguration; once again dating the latter event a year too early. A genuine hiatus in the text then followed, in that no version of ARF contains any information at all about the years 751 and 752, both of which are left blank in all manuscripts. In some copies later scribes did not recognise that the dearth of information was a feature of the author's original version, and left empty space in their manuscripts for the missing years to be filled in, should better exemplars be found; which of course they never were.17 The Continuations, lacking an explicit annal structure were better able to disguise the fact that they too contained no information concerning the years 749 to 753, by resorting to loose chronological persiflage of the quo tempore kind.18

With all of their idiosyncrasies and deficiencies, the two sources can indeed be usefully combined to produce an outline chronology of the years from 741 to 748. The salient features of this would seem to be as follows: in 742 Pippin and Carloman conducted a joint campaign in northern Aquitaine, which involved crossing the Loire at Orléans, burning the suburbs of Bourges and taking Loches. Another campaign followed against the Alamans in the autumn of that year, but whether this was the work of Carloman alone or involved both brothers cannot be known for sure. 743 saw a definite joint expedition into Bavaria, probably resulting from the elopement of Chiltrudis and her marriage to duke Odilo. An autumn campaign of Carloman against the Saxons seems equally certain.

In 744 there may either have been a joint expedition against the Saxons, or the brothers may have split their forces, with Carloman dealing with the Saxons, while Pippin campaigned against the Alamans and their leader Theudobald in the Alps. In 745 there was most likely to have been a joint expedition into Aquitaine, although this is completely ignored in ARF. Equally overlooked by the later is Carloman's attack on the Alamans in 746. Neither source indicates what Pippin may have been doing this year.


747 was the year of Carloman's abdication; whatever its causes. According to ARF Grifo 'fled' into Saxony, and both texts agree that Pippin led an army into Saxon territory later in the same year. In the Continuations the outcome was a military and diplomatic triumph, of which ARF makes no mention. The Revised version of the latter confirms that there was a negotiated settlement rather than a military one. It seems likely that the Continuations were here exaggerating the degree of Pippin's military success.

In 748 Pippin campaigned in Bavaria against Grifo (whom the Continuations can not mention) and against those Bavarians who had supported his seizure of the duchy. He was captured and his infant cousin Tassilo III was installed as duke instead. According to ARF, Pippin then gave Grifo twelve Neustrian counties to administer, but he preferred to flee across the Loire and take refuge with the Aquitanian duke Waiofar; this being a detail that the Continuations can not mention because of their self-imposed silence on his very existence. As for 749 and 750, neither source indicates any form of military activity in these years, which is rather surprising, to say the least.

Such an outline of events may also be found, with very minor variants and occasional chronological confusion, in the so-called 'minor annals'. It is neither supported nor undermined by the handful of genuine charters that can be ascribed to Pippin and Carloman or to 'their' Merovingian king, Childeric, as these are very few in number and in some cases not securely dated. It can at least be said, though, that they do seem to locate Pippin at Saint-Denis on 11th February 748, 17th August 750 and 20th June 751; dates for which otherwise we have no knowledge of his whereabouts.

There is, however, a third major narrative source that can be brought to bear upon the history of Francia in the 740s, and that is the so-called *Annales Mettenses Prioress* (henceforth AMP). The value of the testimony of this text is not always easy to determine, as much of its account of the events of the eighth century is clearly dependent...


22 On charters of Childeric see MGH *DD Merowinger* nos. 190-195 and dep. 405, ed. Th. KÖZER, Hanover 2001, 473-485 and 665.

upon firstly the Continuations of Fredegar and then ARE The work itself may not have been compiled until 803/5, and in its extant form it survives only in the version completed around 830. While it contains dramatic and detailed narratives of some of the central episodes in the careers of Pippin II and Charles Martel, few scholars have wished to place any trust in them. This has in part coloured attitudes towards the rest of the work.

The textual transmission of these annals has not assisted their reputation, in that the earliest manuscript to contain the complete work dates from no earlier than the twelfth century. There are however, fragments of it to be found in manuscripts that can be dated to the ninth and tenth centuries, which seem to validate the reliability of the full form of the text. More significant, perhaps, is the lack of chronological references in the complete version of the work, contained in the twelfth century Durham manuscript. This might imply that the AD datings given in the sole modern edition of AMP are no more than editorial deductions, and that the chronology of the annals remains questionable. However, it is clear from two of the early fragments that a system of AD dating was an inherent feature of the work, even though it was lost in one branch of its transmission, and probably from an early stage. From the dates


25 For older, less receptive views of this work see H. E. BOUILL., Die Anfänge des karolingischen Hauses, Munich 1866, 157-181.


27 The oldest of these is MS London, British Library Arundel 375, ff. 72v to 75v, which contains the opening sections of the work, breaking off in 692. It has been dated to the turn of the eighth/ninth centuries. MS Bern, Burgerbibliothek A 92, item 21, is a trimmed folio reused in a binding, and dating from the 10th century. The same is true of MS Basel, Universitätsbibliothek N. I. 4. On the Basel fragment see K. ESCHE, Die Miniaturen in den Basler Bibliotheken, Museen und Archiven, Basel 1917, 36, nr. 21. I am grateful to Professor M. Steinmann of the Öffentliche Bibliothek of the University of Basel for providing me with a photocopy of this.

28 The 10th century Bern fragment also lacks dates in its original state, though these have been added by a later hand. But MS London BL Arundel 375, which is by far the earliest manuscript to contain part of the work, has a text with integral dates, as does the tenth century Basel fragment. Even if the latter two did not exist, it would seem likely that the original version of the text included an overt system of dating, either by AD or by regnal years, as the divisions between the annals in the Durham manuscript are so carefully marked out by the use of coloured capitals and so forth (as also in the Bern fragment). But with dates being found firmly included in the text in both the Arundel MS and the Basel fragment, it seems certain that the archetype also contained such integral dates, using the AD system. On the other hand, at an early stage in the manuscript tradition (i.e. by the 10th century), a version of the text must have come into being that had become divorced from the original dating system, and this is what is represented by the Bern fragment and the Durham MS; which latter, for all of its importance, shows other signs of being distanced from the archetype.
given in the fragments, it is possible to reconstruct the original chronological structure of the whole work without undue fear of error.

Despite its general dependency on other sources, AMP’s narrative for the 740s is worthy of critical attention, but this first needs to be seen in the light of its treatment of the preceding decade. There are no annals given for the years 726 to 730, while those for 731 to 741 consist almost entirely of extracts or lightly rewritten borrowings from the Continuations of Fredegar. The only differences come in the form of the opening phrases of each annal, which are intended to provide AD dates to replace the purely internal and sometimes confusing chronology of the Continuations. For similar reasons some of the latter’s contents are divided between two annals in AMP.

Only in two places in its treatment of the 730s does AMP offer information not to be found in its source. The first of these is the statement in the annal for 735, which otherwise paraphrases Continuations chapter fifteen, that Charles Martel gave the duchy of Aquitaine to Eudo’s son Hunald in return for his oath of loyalty (fides) made to Charles and to his sons Pippin and Carloman.29 This claim is repeated in the annal for 742 and must raise the suspicion that it constitutes a post-facto justification for the future Mayors’ campaigns in Aquitaine in the 740s. In this way it fulfils an ideological function very similar to that recently detected as underlying ARF’s treatment of the career and fate of Tassilo III.30

The second original element in AMP’s handling of the events of the 730s is more substantial, and comes in the final section of the unusually long annal for 741. This contains a narrative of the origins of Grifo, of his father Charles Martel’s desire to give him a share in the division of the Frankish kingdom that would follow his death, and of the opposition to this plan of his half brothers and of the Franks in general. The annal terminates with an account of how, after Charles Martel’s death, Grifo and his mother were lured to a meeting and captured by Pippin and Carloman, and were then imprisoned by them.

As previously mentioned, the equivalent section of the Continuations of Fredegar is at pains to suppress the very existence of Grifo, and ARF avoids mention of him before 747, thus evading the question of what role he was to have played in his father’s plans for the succession and how he came to be a prisoner in the hands of his half-brothers. It is worth noting that, while we may applaud the greater openness of AMP in this respect, even this work ignores the fact that Grifo did briefly exercise power in Thuringia following the death of Charles Martel, as witnessed by a letter sent

to him by Boniface. Similarly, AMP's account of the Franks' unwillingness to countenance a three-way division of the kingdom ignores the fact that there were those, as the events of 747 and 748 would show, who clearly felt that Grifo did have legitimate claims east of the Rhine and in Bavaria. Moreover, AMP's claims that Swanhild was no more than a concubine of Charles Martel, and that Pippin and Carloman were his only legitimate heirs are clearly specious.

For the 740s the compiler of AMP was able for the first time to make use of ARF as well as the Continuations of Fredegar, and for some annals, such as that for 742, he or she drew heavily on both. This would continue to be the practice of this source in its narrative for the years 743 to 756, after which its debt to ARF increases heavily and that to the Continuations declines markedly, up to the conclusion of the latter in 768. For the 740s, some of the annals of AMP, such as that for the year 745, are thus almost entirely unoriginal. On the other hand, there are other entries with little or no indebtedness to these two sources, and which contain information not to be found elsewhere. This is true of the annals for the years 743, 744, and 746 to 748 (as well as that for 741, already discussed). This independence would continue to be manifested in the annals for the first half of the 750s. In particular, all of those dealing with the years 752 to 756 inclusive contain sections of original material. But from 757 onwards, and especially after 768, AMP becomes little more than a version and then an almost exact copy of ARF.

Concentrating on the 740s, it might be asked if there are any common themes or other elements to be detected in the sections of AMP that do not derive from ARF or the Continuations of Fredegar. The simple answer has to be that in general the annals in question provide fuller information about a number of episodes in these years already referred to in the other sources, rather than introduce entirely new events. In some cases, such as the account of Pippin's campaign in Bavaria in 748, this takes the form of additional details that supplement the accounts to be found in ARF and the Continuations. However, in other instances, notably the descriptions of the Aquitanian duke Hunald's burning of the cathedral of Chartres in 743, his tricking, capturing and blinding of his brother Ato in 744, and his abdication and monastic retirement later the same year, the information given by AMP is entirely unparalleled.

33 On the possibility that the compiler was a nun of Chelles see J. L. NELSON, Gender and Genre in Women Historians of the Early Middle Ages, reprinted in: EADEM, The Frankish World, 750-900, London 1996, 183-197.
34 Annales Mettenses priores a. 743f., ed. SIMSON (cf. note 29) 35f.
So, too, is the account in the annal for 743 of the attempt by pope Zacharias to prevent the conflict between the Franks and the Bavarians. While the speech put into Pippin's mouth, in which he cast doubt on the validity of the papal envoys' credentials and claimed that his victory showed that 'through the intercession of Saint Peter and the judgment of God, Bavaria and the Bavarians belong to the empire of the Franks' is almost certainly anachronistic, the attempted papal intervention is quite credible. It makes sense in both the context of papal-Lombard relations in 743, and that of wider papal-Frankish diplomacy. One of the two envoys named here, the priest Sergius probably also served as ambassador from pope Gregory II to Charles Martel in 739. In general, Pippin's relations with the Papacy and with the Lombard kingdom come to form the dominant theme of AMP's account of the earlier 750s, as long ago was recognised by Ranke.

Equally notable are the additional details relating to the conduct of the Alamans, and in particular of Theudobald son of duke Godafred, who features in the annals for 743, 745, and 746. The annal for 746 also contains the unique account of the placitum held at Canstatt, of the ensuing elimination of the Alaman army, and of the punishing of those Alaman leaders who had supported Theudobald in his bid to aid Odilo of Bavaria against the Frankish Mayors of the Palace. Whether this latter reference is to the events of 743 or to a similar but unrecorded episode in 744 or 745 is not clear.

In these and other examples that could be cited from the AMP annals for the years 741 to 756, information can be found that is unparalleled in other sources, and which can not be explained away as being an expansion of or rationalisation from the briefer narratives of other texts. The conclusion has to be that the compiler of AMP had access to additional source material of near contemporary date for the period 741 to 756, which has not otherwise survived; evidence which, while needing to be approached with due scholarly caution, is clearly worthy of respect.

Pulling together information from all of the main literary sources, together with what few other items are pertinent, can produce a rather more rounded or nuanced picture of the events of these years than that provided by either ARF or the Continuations, or even a combination of the two of them. Some of the salient features of such a narrative that has been enhanced by the testimony of AMP would seem to be as follows. A plan for the succession was probably drawn up by Charles Martel in 740 or 741. This certainly involved the creation of a share, involving at least Thuringia, for his

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35 Ibid. 34f.
38 Annales Mettenses priores a. 743-746, ed. SIMSON (cf. note 29) 33-37.
third son Grifo. It may be that these arrangements led to opposition from partisans of his elder sons even before Charles's death. One consequence of this could have been the execution of their probable relative on their mother's side, abbot Wido of Saint-Wandrille.\(^{39}\)

Following Charles's death in October 741 Grifo was installed in office east of the Rhine; whether formally as a joint Mayor along with his half-brothers is not known. However, soon afterwards he was lured to a meeting outside his territory, and despite taking refuge in Laon, was surrounded and captured, along with his mother, by Pippin and Carloman. The distribution of the component parts of the *regnum* referred to by ARF in its annal for 742 thus probably represents a secondary division, undertaken by the brothers once they had got Grifo out of the way.

Whether this flouting of their father's intentions and deposition of their half-brother contributed to or provided a pretext for the refusal of the territorial dukes of the Aquitanians, Bavarians, and Saxons (accepting in the last case that this is what *Theodericus Saxo* may have been) to accept the authority of Pippin and Carloman is not known, but this is clearly what happened in practice.\(^{40}\) In the case of Bavaria the situation was exacerbated by the flight of their sister Chiltrudis and her marriage to duke Odilo; an episode deliberately suppressed by ARF because it emphasised the close Carolingian descent of their son Tassilo III.\(^{41}\)

None of these dukedoms feature in the list of territories to be divided between the brothers in ARF, and it does not seem that they were intended to be more than tributary to the new Mayors. In all cases they were subjected to joint campaigns by Pippin and Carloman to enforce their submission. With the Alamans the situation was different, in that their duchy had already been abolished, despite the continued existence of an heir to it in the person of Theudobald, son of the former duke Godafred.\(^{42}\) Significantly, Alamannia had been included in the division of territories made by Charles Martel, when it may have been assigned either to Carloman or to Grifo.\(^{43}\) The result was a continuous and intense conflict with the Alamans, leading up to the massacre, if that is what it was, that took place at Canstatt in 746.

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40 Annales Mettenses priores a. 743f., 747, ed. Simson (cf. note 29) 35f., 41. In these annals Theoderic is called *dux Saxonum*, and it seems sensible to regard him as a territorial duke, in the manner of those of the Bavarians and of the Alamans, even if Frankish sources otherwise conceal the existence of such an office.
41 For ARF's treatment of Tassilo see in particular Becher, Eid und Herrschaft (cf. note 30) 21-77.
43 Fredegar, Chronicae cont. c. 23, ed. Krusch (cf. note 3) 179, and ed. Wallace-Hadrill (cf. note 1) 97. Here Alamania is said to have been given to Carloman, but so too is Thuringia, which is known to have formed part of Grifo's inheritance.
In the case of Alamannia vigorous, and no doubt violent methods seem to have worked, in that resistance ended in 746, thus allowing Carloman to contemplate giving up his office the following year. With Aquitaine, however, there seems to have been a series of tit for tat raids occurring throughout the decade, with Pippin and Carloman sacking the suburbs of Bourges in 742 and Hunald burning Chartres cathedral in 743. His retirement into monastic seclusion in 745, preceding that of Carloman is somewhat surprising, but at least he had taken the precaution of making it impossible for his brother to try to take over the dukedom in place of his son, by having him blinded. Carloman might have been advised to follow this precedent too.

Carloman’s son Drogo is, of course, the most notable absentee from the historiographical texts examined here. The only one of them to mention him, and by name too, is the otherwise taciturn Continuations of Fredegar. That he does feature here would suggest that he was firmly in Pippin’s hands at the time this text was being written, probably some time between 751 and 753, and that this was not then the case with Grifo. The statement of the Continuator that Carloman handed over both realm and son to Pippin is, of course, mendacious. But a letter preserved in the epistolary collection of Boniface shows that he did, albeit briefly, succeed to his father’s authority in eastern Francia and across the Rhine. It is perhaps significant that in his 747 campaign against the Saxons, Pippin is described as coming from Thuringia, as he may well have been there to suppress his nephew’s ephemeral regime.

Only AMP indicates that Grifo seized power in Bavaria in 748 as a consequence of the death of Odilo. His own close relationship to the ducal line and the prospect of the succession of a half-Frankish infant, Tassilo, who could not have been more than five years old, made him a more attractive candidate than most Frankish historical sources care to admit. There is no necessary reason to think that he had been forced out of Saxony in 747, as the outcome of Pippin’s expedition that year is far from clear. Bavaria in the wake of Odilo’s death may thus have represented an opportunity seized. That Grifo was compensated with the grant of twelve Neustrian counties after his ejection from Bavaria is surely significant, as it must signify that Pippin was unwilling or unable merely to incarcerate him again.

When Grifo actually abandoned this territory to flee into Aquitaine remains debatable, even if ARF assigns this specifically to the year 748. If so, this is a very rapid and unexplained change of heart on Grifo’s part. The next certain thing that may be

44 Annales Mettenses priores a. 744, ed. Simson (cf. note 29) 36.
known of him was that he was killed in the Alps in a battle with two of Pippin's counts in 753, while making his way from Aquitaine to the Lombard kingdom. AMP obviously had conflicting chronological information about these years, as it refers to Pippin granting Neustrian counties to Grifo in both 747 and 749. This may suggest that the compiler was here drawing on two different sources, one of which was almost certainly AREAS for the latter, as its account of the years from 749 to 752 is in effect blank other than for the references to the processes of Pippin's royal inauguration, it is quite possible that the Annalist merely bundled all of his information about Grifo in this period into his annal for 748. The flight into Aquitaine could have thus taken place at any point from 748 onwards, but probably before 751, as his careful exclusion from the Continuations would suggest that he was in open conflict with his half-brother when the latter became king.

The years 749 and 750 remain an almost complete historiographical blank in all of the sources; something that strains credulity, and suggests very significant manipulation of the record. So effective has this been that it has proved virtually impossible to produce alternative sources of information or interpretations that can throw any more light on the real sequence of events immediately leading up to and surrounding Pippin's transformation from Mayor of the Palace into Rex Francorum.

2. Pippin III and the Frankish Church 741-751

It is necessary to consider Pippin III's involvement with the Frankish church separately from his more purely secular interests largely because there is very little overlap in the sources dealing with the two spheres of his activity. It is one of the least remarked upon but most striking features of early Carolingian historiography that the various sets of annals and longer works that were written in the eighth and early ninth centuries, all of which are presumed to be the work of clerics, are resolutely secular in their contents. Whatever their size, from the briefest to the most elaborate, they concentrate primarily or even exclusively upon the military campaigns of the rulers. The deaths and successions of prominent bishops and abbots are very rarely mentioned, and few references are made to ecclesiastical gatherings of any sort.

47 Fredegar, Chronicae cont. c. 35, ed. WALLACE-HADRILL (cf. note 1) 103. This, the only reference to Grifo in any part of the Continuations, comes in the final section of the work, written after 768, and thus far removed from the context of the early 750s, in which the previous continuator was writing.


49 Even mention of the general assemblies or Marchfields only becomes a regular feature of ARF from 811 onwards, though between 763 and 768 there is always a reference to Pippin holding placitum suum.
clerics who are mentioned in the annals tend to appear only because of their roles as royal envoys or *missi*. Even leaving the purely ecclesiastical dimension aside, it is surprising how limited a perspective these sources give on local as opposed to royal concerns and activities. Secular notables are as absent from the record as clerical ones, except where they feature in royal military expeditions. All of this is in marked contrast to the more discursive and localised narratives of earlier Frankish historians, such as Gregory of Tours and Fredegar.

The uniformity in these respects of the early Frankish historiographical tradition, which only really begins to change from the 830s onwards, is remarkable when it be recognised that the compilers of these annals and histories were working in a variety of different locations, each of which will have passed through its own series of events of local significance and for whom the deaths and appointments of counts, bishops and abbots can hardly have been matters of no interest. However it was achieved, it seems clear that the nature of the material deemed appropriate for annalistic record was widely agreed and generally adhered to by chroniclers writing in many different parts of Francia over a period of about a century.\(^5^0\)

It is not the annals that provide the best perspective on Pippin III's involvement with the Church in Francia and beyond. Instead, it is necessary to look at other types of evidence. Of particular importance for this period are the letters written by and sent to archbishop Boniface of Mainz.\(^5^1\) These contain a wealth of information, some of which serves to correct or even contradict the annals, as has been seen in the cases of both Grifo and Drogo, discussed above. They survive in a small number of different collections that began to be formed as early as the generation following his death in 754.\(^5^2\) Unfortunately, Boniface's areas of activity were primarily in territories that until 747 were controlled by Carloman. So there are fewer references to be found in these letters to Pippin than to his brother, at least in the period before he became king. In respect of Pippin's royal elevation, it is interesting to note that, contrary to ARF's account, none of the letters gives any hint that Boniface played any special role in that event, let alone that he performed a ritual of anointing the new monarch.\(^5^3\)

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\(^5^0\) See Collins, Frankish Past (cf. note 17).


\(^5^2\) The introduction in S. Bonifatii et Lullii Epistolae, ed. TANGL (cf. note 31) VI-XXXI, provides a useful account of the manuscripts and the collections; see also his 'Studien zur Neuausgabe der Bonifatius-Briefe' in: Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde 40 (1916) 639-790 and 41 (1917) 23-101.

\(^5^3\) Annales regni Francorum a. 750, ed. KURZE (cf. note 6) 8 and 10: *Pippinus [...] unctus per manum sanctae memoriae Bonefacii archiepiscopi [...].*
What may be found in the letters relating to Pippin as Mayor is limited but of considerable value. In particular, there are hints at some of the political processes that lie behind the brief references or even complete silences of the annals. To take one small but significant example, the letter referred to above, that establishes that Drogo did however briefly succeed his father as de facto ruler of eastern Francia, actually poses a vital question. Its author is anonymous, and his correspondent Andhemus is otherwise unknown, but must have been sufficiently close to Boniface to know his whereabouts. What the writer is asking is to be told whether the archbishop 'has gone to the synod of the duke of the western provinces or to the son of Carloman'. This is not just a matter of travel planning but constitutes a vital political question. Has Boniface gone to Pippin III's assembly or to that of Drogo; in other words, which of the two is he throwing his weight behind? While no answer has been preserved, what it would have said must be obvious. Boniface went west. His support, as well as that of other leading clerical and lay figures, was clearly the precondition to Pippin being able to move as quickly and effectively as he did to dispossess his nephew. The question of who went to which of the two courts or assemblies was a vital and public way of weighing up the respective support enjoyed by the two parties.

That Boniface gave his backing to Pippin is hardly surprising. A letter that he received from pope Zacharias in June 744, referred to a previous one that he had sent to Rome praising the support he had received from both Pippin and Carloman. As in most of their military activities, the two of them were clearly acting in tandem. Other ecclesiastical initiatives set in motion or supported by Boniface in 744 and 745 were also clearly stated in letters exchanged with the pope to be involving both brothers. Given a choice in 747 between Pippin and his nephew, for Boniface to favour the already proven western ruler over the young and inexperienced eastern one thus made perfect if primarily pragmatic sense. Pippin's involvement in virtually all of the campaigns across the Rhine in preceding years also meant that his knowledge of and involvement in these regions was already assured.

The joint interests of both Pippin and Carloman in ecclesiastical affairs in 744 and 745, referred to in letters exchanged between Boniface and pope Zacharias, related to proposals for the reform of the Frankish church. In particular, an attempt was made to reestablish a metropolitan structure, with the elevation of a small number of sees to archiepiscopal status. Attempts were also made in these years to ensure more regular synodal meetings of the bishops. A letter of 5th November 744 from pope Zacharias to Boniface refers to a request sent in the names of Pippin and Carloman for the dis-

54 Cf. note 45 above.
55 S. Bonifatii et Lulii Epistolae ep. 57, ed. TANGL (cf. note 31) 102-105.
patch of pallia to the archbishops of Rheims, Sens and Soissons, thus recognising their new metropolitan status. Of the three, two were in territories controlled by Pippin.

Another letter from the pope, dated to 31st October 745, refers to a recent synod of Frankish bishops held ‘through the mediation’ of the two brothers. A general papal letter to the clergy and laity of Francia that was dispatched in relation to that meeting was also held to have been distributed ‘with the concurrence’ of the rulers. Neither the text of the papal letter nor that of the acts of the synod of 745 have survived. However, three sets of conciliar decrees that are to be assigned to dates in preceding years have been preserved. One of these was held under the aegis of Pippin.

This ‘Council of Soissons’ of 2nd March 744 is known from the record of its acts that are preserved in five manuscripts. Two of these have been shown to be copies of other extant codices, but the other three stem from separate capitulary collections of differing but ninth century dates. There seem no grounds for doubting the authenticity of this text.

The character of the event it records needs some explanation, in that it was not so much an independent and exclusively ecclesiastical council as the separate gathering of twenty three bishops who had come to Soissons to take part in the annual assembly of the Frankish nobility. Its decrees were issued under the authority of Pippin, here described as dux et princeps Francorum, and una cum consensu episcoporum [...] comitibus et obitimatibus Francorum. This is repeated at the end of the document.

It was eminently sensible to tie in the holding of such ecclesiastical discussions with the ‘Marchfield’ assembly, as the bishops would have been expected to be present at it, and to get them together separately at another time in the year was probably impractical. The Council’s second decree ordering the holding of annual synods, reflected long term aspirations in conciliar legislation, but may have had a better chance of success by virtue of the linking with the assemblies. In practice though, we know of no such synods being held after 745 for about a decade. But the existence of such a precedent for the holding of synods in conjunction with the Marchfield assemblies made it much easier for ecclesiastical matters to be discussed and legislated for regularly in the time of Charlemagne.
Several of the items recorded as having been discussed by the bishops at Soissons in 744 reflect the canons of an earlier meeting held in an unknown location in Carloman's territories in 742/3. The condemnation of a bishop called Aldebertus for teaching and practices deemed heretical, and the decision to establish two metropolitan bishoprics in Pippin's territories relate to issues to be found being treated in various of the letters in Boniface's collection. There are thus clear indications that the Frankish episcopate from both parts of the kingdom were co-operating to try to ensure uniformity in their decision making, irrespective of political divisions, and that they had the support of both Pippin and Carloman in so doing. In practice, though, many of these initiatives seem to have stalled or failed to make progress from the later 740s onwards, and it is hard not to suspect that Pippin's interest in them declined after he acquired control over his brother's portion of the Regnum Francorum.

The final period of Pippin III's tenure of the office of Mayor is an almost complete blank as far as ecclesiastical events are concerned. The last reference to his involvement in such matters comes in another letter from pope Zacharias to Boniface, which is dated 5th January 747, and must refer to events of 746. In it he tells the archbishop that he has sent capitula de sacerdotali ordine et quae ad salutem animarum pertinent to Pippin, in response to the latter's request, transmitted by a priest called Ardobanus.

The reference to 'Chapters' (capitula) would seem to relate to conciliar legislation, but is too unspecific to indicate which particular canon law texts were meant. Why in particular Pippin wanted the book or books he received is not indicated, nor is it possible to know for sure what use he made of them. It is at least significant that he had established direct communication with the Papacy through envoys of his own from as early as 746, and was not just depending on Boniface to serve as his intermediary with Rome. After this episode the records of Pippin's ecclesiastical involvements enter the same evidential 'black hole' as those relating to his military activities, and apart from the accounts of his dispatch of bishop Burchard and abbot Fulrad to the Pope at some time between 747 and 751, this extends until after our emergence from it on the far side of his consecration as king.

62 Karlmann Principis Capitulare (742 April 21), ed. A. Borelius, MGH Capitularia Regum Francorum 1, Hanover 1883, 24-26.
64 S. Bonifatii et Lullii Epistolae ep. 77, ed. Tangl (cf. note 31) 159-161.