Herausgegeben von Matthias Becher und Jörg Jarnut

Scriptorium
Münster 2004
Towards a Carolingian Aristocracy

The focus of the conference that produced these papers was on change. One family, the Carolingians, left the ranks of the aristocracy for the exalted status of royalty, or rather some of its members did so while other members of it enjoyed a more ambiguous status. For the aristocracy itself, kingship was now embodied in this new dynasty. We know that the Carolingian aristocracy was not a new creation but had its roots in the earlier period. This sort of continuity should not conceal the fact that relations between the Carolingians and the aristocracy changed. This paper does not aim to compare and contrast the relationship of the aristocracy to the Carolingians before and after the events of 751-754 but rather to outline some ways in which the aristocracy learned to recognise the new dynasty as the centre of the contemporary political system. It may be helpful here to recall a miracle story involving Gertrud of Nivelles. According to a late seventh-century source written at Nivelles, the noble woman Adela of Pfalzel was unconvinced of the saintly status of Gertrud until her son was revived from drowning by being placed on the saint’s bed, which thus acted as a wonder-working relic and was duly enshrined by the grateful Adela. While one can hardly claim Adela as a member of anti-Pippinid/Carolingian circles, her enforced recognition of the outstanding charisma of the Pippinid saint Gertrud can stand as an emblem of the lesson which the aristocracy had to learn.¹

Modern scholarship’s stress on co-operation between the new rulers and the aristocracy may obscure the fact that this lesson needed to be learned. Even in an article surveying opposition to Charles Martel Horst Ebling stressed that it is not helpful for historians to look at this period in terms of a constitutional split or opposition between crown and aristocracy. He drew on Karl Brunner’s work to formulate two general points that need to be borne in mind when looking at aristocratic opposition to rulers in this period: first, opposition is only opposition on the part of individuals or groups, it does not involve the aristocracy as a whole, and, secondly, in order to detect the opposition, the essential tool is Personenforschung.² Both these points

Stuart Airlie

reinforce each other and in fact court the danger of resulting in circular argument but in general terms they are true enough. The work of Gerd Tellenbach and his school together with that of Karl Ferdinand Werner has taught us to look at the Carolingians and aristocracy as mutually dependent partners. While Matthew Innes has recently stressed the role of consensus in relations between early Carolingian rulers and localities, Janet Nelson has done so for the centre, highlighting the language of the Fredegar continuator on the making of Pippin's royal status: "with the consent of the Franks [...] by the election of the Franks", though we should note that this stress does not prevent either of them from grasping what was changing in the new world that consensus created.

But it is this change, the fact of change, that we ought not to miss. Charles Martel's rule had done much to consolidate Carolingian authority but the later followers of the Carolingians knew that Pippin's move towards kingship in 751-754 had marked a break, a new beginning. The most famous expression of this can be seen in the opening of Einhard's Life of Charlemagne, but it can also be found in other texts. Primus adest Pippin [...] rex bonus wrote Ermoldus for another king Pippin in the 820s. Writing in the 840s, Lupus of Ferrières looked back on Pippin III as the origo of the reigning dynasty. Hincmar of Rheims looked back on Frankish history in the time but many of his reconstructions of family connections, and the reliance he places on them, are not secure; see the review by R. Scheffer, in: Historisches Jahrbuch 102 (1982) 220f. Still generally relevant to consideration of relations between aristocracy and Pippin are W. Affeldt, Das Problem der Mitwirkung des Adels an politischen Entscheidungsprozessen im Frankenreich vornehmlich des 8. Jahrhunderts, in: Theorie und Praxis der Geschichtswissenschaft. Festschrift für Hans Herzfeld, ed. D. Kurze, Berlin / New York 1972, 404-423, and W. Affeldt, Untersuchungen zur Königserhebung Pippins, in: Frühmittelalterliche Studien 14 (1980) 95-187.


before Pippin, the era of Charles Martel, as a grim time of internecine warfare. Such men, themselves members of a Carolingian aristocracy, understood the political contours of their world in historical terms; they knew that a new dynasty had arrived and that the aristocracy had become a 'Carolingian' aristocracy. Significantly for our purposes, a later observer conceptualised the relationship between Pippin and his nobles as one of potential hostility and jealousy. I refer here to the story in Notker of St Gall's *Gesta Karoli Magni* where Pippin quells discontent among the *primates exercitus* by slaying a lion and a bull. Triumphantly, he poses the question to them: *Videtur vobis [...] utrum dominus vester esse possim?*7 This question could serve as a motto for this paper.

One way of convincing the aristocracy of the special status of the Carolingians was by mobilising to act amidst the aristocracy those members of the house who were not to be rulers. The military and diplomatic careers of, for example, Pippin's uncle Count Childebrand and half-brother Jerome are good illustrations of this, particularly as we know that both men worked to broadcast the special qualities of the dynasty: Childebrand via the Continuation of Fredegar and Jerome by his copying out (as a nine-year old) a *Life* of St Arnulf of Metz. Pippin's cousin Nibelung and daughter Gisela (if we accept that the *Annales Mettenses priores* were composed under her aegis) could be added to this list as later examples of members of Pippin's family working to represent the Carolingians' glory in texts.8 Such figures travelled and represented the Carolingian ruler across a wide area, no matter where that ruler himself happened to be: Childebrand in Burgundy, Jerome on journeys to Italy.9 We can surely be confident that members of the aristocracy recognised such men as belonging to the Carolingian family; that would seem to be the message from the later references such as the story of Theodericus, *propinquus regis*, in the *Annales regni Francorum* for 782 (though we

---


should note the resentment directed at him in the story) and from Thegan's description of Bernard of Septimania as being of the *stirps regia*.10

But not all 'marginal' Carolingians could be so easily placed. It was precisely their Carolingian blood that made some of them, such as Carloman's son Drogo, so dangerous to Pippin and so credible to the aristocracy as alternative sources of patronage. Drogo had to be made into a marginal figure through effort on Pippin's behalf.11

A particularly sinister *Doppelgänger* for Pippin was his half-brother Grifo. It is normal for historians to stress how troublesome Grifo was for Carloman and Pippin. Karl Ferdinand Werner, for example, after surveying Grifo's journey through Saxony, Bavaria, Aquitaine etc., concluded that Grifo's career showed how any dispute within the ruling family was exploited by 'les pouvoirs périphériques'.12

We can, however, examine Grifo's turbulent career from another angle. In some important ways, he can be seen, not simply as a menace to the grand projects of Pippin and Carloman, but as a builder of that world in which the aristocracy learned to obey the Carolingians. Let us look, for example, at the earliest observable stage of his political career. Swanahild and Charles Martel did not plan for him to be given power in some peripheral region. On the contrary, he was to be given territory (a kingdom?) in the very centre of the *regnum Francorum*: parts of Austrasia, Neustria and Burgundy.13 Nor were Swanahild and Grifo working in a vacuum in 741. Members of the aristocracy witnessed and participated in their actions. The charter of Charles Martel for the abbey of St Denis of September of that year was witnessed by at least three counts (Radbertus, Rayganbalbus and Salaco). It is reasonable to see in these men office-holders of Austrasia and one of them, Count Salaco, may have had links with

---

12 K. F. Werner, Les origines (Histoire de France 1) Paris 1984, 367; Idem, Les principautés périphériques dans le monde franc du VIIIe siècle, in: I Problemi dell'Occidente nel secolo VIII (Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 20) Spoleto 1973, 483-514, 511-512. The hostility of the peripheral regions to the prospect of rule by Pippin and Carloman was of course very real and this is stressed in sources; see I. Wood, The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751, London / New York 1994, 287-90, for a lucid summary. There are, however, other ways of looking at Grifo's career.
Towards a Carolingian Aristocracy

Alsace. It is also reasonable to see Gairefredus, the count of Paris referred to in a later charter (753) as having worked with Swanahild as part of this aristocratic party being moved into Grifo’s orbit. It may not be reasonable, however, to see these men as hard-core supporters of Grifo. After all, the situation in 741 and immediately afterwards was very fluid (the referendary for this 741 charter was Chrodegang, who was to be very much the man of Pippin, not of Grifo) and, as Paul Fouracre has rightly observed, much of the political order created by Charles Martel depended on the ‘personal terror’ he inspired and loyalties thus dissolved on his death in 741.

Nonetheless, we would do well to reflect on the degree of support that looked as if it might flow to Grifo in the uneasy period after the death of Charles Martel: a man such as Gairefredus was not a negligible figure. Further, when his half-brothers moved against him, Grifo took refuge in Laon and Paul Fouracre speculates that Charibert, count of Laon, ‘played some part in Grifo’s capture’, noting that this might be a factor in Pippin’s marrying that Count’s daughter in 744. This may well be the case; after all, the families of Pippin and Charibert were connected. But perhaps Pippin’s marriage also shows that the loyalty of Laon, which Grifo saw as a stronghold, was not to be taken for granted and so a ‘new’ alliance had to be forged between Pippin and the aristocracy of this area. Beyond such details of factional support, and these details are probably lost beyond recall, two main points stand out.

First, Grifo’s bid for power involved several highly placed members of the aristocracy. This need not mean that they were his supporters but the list of members of the aristocracy who were affected by this part of the Grifo affair is potentially substantial: the counts of the 741 charter, Count Gairefredus of Paris, the count of Laon, even Boniface, whose letter to Grifo is relevant here as it shows that Boniface thought that Grifo was a credible contender for the succession. We might be able to add to this list Wido, propinquus of Charles Martel and abbot of St Wandrille. It is also possible

15 On Gairefredus, see Pippin’s charter MGH DD Karolinorum 1, no. 6, ed. E. Mühlbacher, Hanover 1906, 9-11, and also published as Chartae Latinae Antiquiores 15, no. 598, ed. H. Atsma/J. Vezin, Zurich 1986, 15-21; the possibility, entertained mainly in earlier French scholarship, that the name Gairefredus is actually a version of Grifo and that the latter should be seen as being count of Paris, is now rejected; see Schüssler, Die fränkische Reichsteilung (cf. note 13) 56 note 70; Kasten, Königssöhne (cf. note 8) 115; C. Sehmpf, La préhistoire des Capétiens 481-987. Première partie: Mérovingiens, Carolingiens et Robertiens, Villeneuve d’Ascq 1993, 177 note 192.
16 Fouracre, Age of Charles Martel (cf. note 5) 165, 167.
17 Fouracre, Age of Charles Martel (cf. note 5) 167.
19 S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae ep. 48, ed. M. Tangle, MGH Epp. sel. 1, Berlin 1916, 76-78; Boniface here considers Grifo as likely to have authority in Thuringia.
that Theudoald, former mayor of the palace and son of Grimoald and grandson of Pippin II and Plectrud, was involved in this episode. Annals record under 741: *Carolus mortuus et Theodald interfectus est*. Perhaps he was tempted to back a candidate who bore a version of his father's name (the name Grifo possibly = Grimoald). All this simply underscores the seriousness of Grifo’s bid for power.\textsuperscript{20}

But there is also a second, more general, point. Grifo’s bid for power riveted the attention of the aristocracy on the Carolingian family, i.e. on the sons of Charles Martel. If Wido and Theudoald were caught up in it, that simply shows how the quarrels of the sons of Charles Martel now drew the other branches of the Carolingian kin into a game played by the rules of the sons of Charles. This game also drew in the aristocracy as a whole. Our surviving sources are anti-Grifo in tone and content. The Continuator of Fredegar, for example, emphasises the support of the aristocracy for Charles Martel’s division of his regna between his sons (*princeps consilio obtitum suorum expetito filis suis regna dividit*). The *Annales Mettenses priores* tell us that Charles divided his principatum between Carloman and Pippin, that the aristocracy participated in this, but that ‘the Franks were very distressed’ at the granting of territory to Grifo and that they took the lead in the campaign against him.\textsuperscript{21} This is part of the deliberate blackening of the reputation of Grifo and the retrospective minimising of his support, but in itself the stress on the role of the aristocracy is surely correct. The rise of Grifo, and the falling of his shadow across the centre of the kingdom, would have meant that the aristocracy would have had to make new calculations of loyalty. Some would have relished the new chances opened up while others, probably the majority, would have found such new prospects would have made an already tense question of succession unbearable. Some sense of the violence and conflict generated by these tensions may be gained from a letter of Boniface to pope Zacharias. In this letter, to be dated to early 742, i.e. just after the Grifo conflict, Boniface laments the fact that his own preferred candidate to succeed him, Gregory of Utrecht, has lost the favour of *dux* Carloman and that it is most uncertain that he

\textsuperscript{20} Wido: *Gesta Sanctorum Patrum Fontanellensis Coenobii VII*, 1, ed. F. Lohier/R. P. J. Laporte, Rouen / Paris 1936, 56-58; Werner, Adelsfamilien (cf. note 1) 311 note 593a and 312 note 596; Fouracre, Age of Charles Martel (cf. note 5) 160. Theudoald: *Annales Laureshamenses a. 741*, ed. G. H. Pertz, MGH SS 1, Hanover 1826, 26, and Collins, Deception and Misrepresentation (cf. note 8) 233. It must be admitted that the evidence, particularly on Theudoald, is not strong enough for us to be certain that both these men were involved in the Grifo affair; on doubts over Theudoald’s involvement and indeed his very survival to this date, see T. Offergeld, *Reges Pueri. Das Königrtum Minderjähriger im frühen Mittelalter* (MGH Schriften 50) Hanover 2001, 302 note 10.

Towards a Carolingian Aristocracy

will now be preferred. This is because a brother of Gregory had killed an uncle of Carloman and no settlement to this conflict has yet been reached. This episode is very probably connected with the struggles around Grifo in 741 and reveals the sombre atmosphere of resentment and rivalry in which they unfolded. Gregory, however, can hardly be counted as anti-Carolingian. All this means that the quarrel of the sons of Charles was at the centre of the aristocracy's political attention. The military expeditions of 742 against Aquitaine would also have provided opportunities for the aristocracy to negotiate and discuss the new settlement. It is significant that the Reichsteilung agreed on at Vieux-Poitiers took place in this military context. The army was much more than a military institution, it was a political community as well. The problem of Grifo became an agenda for this community and thus helped give it an identity.

This point can be further developed. Grifo needs to be seen as an active element operating within a system that worked to make the aristocracy into a Carolingian aristocracy in a Carolingian landscape. The collusion of Gairefredus, count of Paris, marks a further stage in the moving of Gairefredus' family into the orbit of the Carolingians. Even in prison, Grifo worked for this system. He was confined in the stronghold of Chêremont. He thus added to what one might call the Carolingian-ness of this centre, where Pippin II appears to have been buried. In a way, this can be paralleled with the ninth-century imprisoning of Hugh, son of Lothar II, in Prüm, where Lothar I was buried. Chêremont, though less elaborately so than Prüm, thus was a permanent centre of Carolingian memory and identity (or at least until Grifo escaped!). Pippin and Carloman might have to journey to Aquitaine, Alemannia etc, but Grifo stayed at Chêremont, on occluded display as a symbol of Carolingian identity. The burial of Charles Martel at St Denis and the confining of Swanhild at Chelles had something of

22. S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae ep. 50, ed. TANGL (cf. note 19) 83; Boniface does not refer to Gregory by name here but careful sifting of the evidence by M. Werner offers a convincing context, see WERNER, Adelsfamilien (cf. note 1) 304-313.
23. [...] in ipso itinere divisarunt regnum Francorum inter se in loco, qui dicitur Vetus-Pictavis. Annales regni Francorum a. 742, ed. KURZE (cf. note 10) 4; SCHÜSSLER, Die fränkische Reichsteilung (cf. note 13) 59.
24. FOURACRE, Age of Charles Martel (cf. note 5) 163-164.
the same effect.\textsuperscript{26} The same point also emerges from the letter of St Boniface to Grifo. Brigitte Kasten has drawn attention to the importance of this letter's revealing that Charles and Swanahild turned to Boniface (at least) for prayers for Grifo.\textsuperscript{27} Prayers cannot be reduced simply to political instrumentality but we see here the building of the liturgical network that was to transmit the names of the Carolingians through the kingdom, and thus to mark them out as special. And Grifo worked within this system. The later story of Abbot Leudfred of Madrie curing the ailing child Grifo fits in here.\textsuperscript{28} The health, the spiritual well-being, the claims for power and even the imprisonment of a figure such as Grifo drew members of the aristocracy deeper into a web of Carolingian authority and legitimacy.

What this means is that the stress of modern scholarship on Grifo's connections with 'les pouvoirs périphériques', while not wrong, is misleading in its emphasis. From such a perspective, Grifo appears as a threat to Carolingian hegemony. But from the perspective that I have been outlining, Grifo can be seen as an architect of that hegemony. In his impact upon the aristocracy, he was a recruiting-sergeant for Carolingian royalty. Who else worked so hard, and on such a wide canvas, to be a focus for resentment against Pippin and thus, paradoxically, to canalise resentment and dissent into channels monopolised by Carolingians?

Of course, neither Grifo nor Pippin would have shared this view. The \textit{Annales Mettenses priores}, in the entry for 747, tell us that Pippin, 'moved by mercy', freed Grifo from the custody in which Carloman had confined him. It may be that Pippin did this in order to unleash Grifo as an extra Carolingian on the political scene in which Carloman had confined him. It may be that Pippin did this in order to unleash Grifo as an extra Carolingian on the political scene in which Carloman had confined him. It may be that if Carloman had indeed released Grifo from custody to scotch the bid for power in Aquitaine by Louis the German's son, the evidence is ambiguous and the risk was high, J. L. Nelson, Charles the Bald, London / New York 1992, 173.

\textsuperscript{26} Annales Mettenses priores a. 741, ed. Söss (cf. note 18) 32f.; on the importance of burial places and family identity, Le Jan, Famille et pouvoir (cf. note 18) 35-57.

\textsuperscript{27} S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae ep. 48, ed. Tauc (cf. note 19) 77, refers to spiritual bonds of \textit{memoria} between himself and Grifo created at the behest of Charles Martel and Swanahild; Kasten, Königssöhne (cf. note 8) 108.

\textsuperscript{28} Vita Leutfredi abbatis Madriacensis c. 17, ed. W. Levison, MGH SS rer. Merov. 7, Hanover / Leipzig 1920, 15, which associates Leudfred with Laon; Kasten, Königssöhne (cf. note 8) 108; Goetz, Karl Martell und die Heiligen (cf. note 6) 108.

\textsuperscript{29} Annales Mettenses priores a. 747, ed. Söss (cf. note 18) 39f.; Haselbach, Aufstieg und Herrschaft (cf. note 21) 99f. Becher, Drogo (cf. note 11) 146 argues for Pippin having Grifo released; like the present writer, Fouracre, Age of Charles Martel (cf. note 5) 172, is sceptical.

\textsuperscript{30} It may be that Charles the Bald deliberately took such a risk in 854 by having his nephew Pippin II of Aquitaine released from custody to scotch the bid for power in Aquitaine by Louis the German's son, but the evidence is ambiguous and the risk was high, J. L. Nelson, Charles the Bald, London / New York 1992, 173.
Towards a Carolingian Aristocracy

been responsible for the initial incarceration of Grifo, then Carloman's retirement to Italy could have been the signal for the 'cancelling' of such orders. What is certain is that the uncertainty and jockeying for primacy at the heart of the Carolingian family that accompanied Carloman's retirement had a deep impact on the political nation. The preparations and negotiations that surrounded Carloman's withdrawal were weighty enough to mean that no host was summoned for that year. In such a situation, Pippin did not have the securely centralised authority to ensure either Grifo's firm confinement or his release as a puppet under surveillance. Chèvremont had been in Carloman's part of the kingdom and his journey to a monastery was a form of political death (though the continuing contacts between the former mayor and Francia show that we should not exaggerate this aspect) which meant that arrangements that depended on his will could now break down. The death of Otto II in 983 offers an instructive parallel. The disappearance of the emperor meant that his dangerous kinsman Henry 'the Wrangler' of Bavaria now emerged from his enforced confinement at the hands of the bishop of Utrecht. As Gerd Althoff has pointed out, Henry was not a 'state prisoner' but a prisoner of the emperor, and on the latter's death, Henry was free. With the tensions inside the ruling family coming to the boil, all bets were off. Grifo's jailers could no longer dare to keep him in confinement and events were to show that Grifo had enough supporters to capitalise on the opportunities now presenting themselves. All this is part of the insecurity within his own family, let alone the prospect of challenges from outside it, that was to push Pippin towards the throne.

Of course, Grifo posed a special kind of menace to Pippin after he emerged from captivity in Chèvremont. As a son of Swanahild, he had particular claims in Bavaria, for example, and neither Waifar of Aquitaine nor Aistulf of Lombardy can be seen as being pro-Carolingian in their interest in Grifo. On some levels, however, questions of individual loyalty matter less than communications and structure. We can see this through examining four examples from Grifo's career. First, let us take Grifo's supporter in Bavaria, (possibly Franks) count Swithger. Swithger's interests were not confined to Bavaria. His patronage of Willibald had brought him into contact with

---

1 Haselbach rightly stresses that the account in the Annales Mettenses priores is tendentious and that its portrayal of Carloman as consistently harsh towards Grifo is not to be trusted, Haselbach, Aufstieg und Herrschaft (cf. note 21) 103f.
5 On the challenge posed to the Carolingians, and to Pippin in particular, by such figures, Wood, Merovingian Kingdoms (cf. note 12) 273-292.
6 Annales regni Francorum a.748, ed. Kurze (cf. note 10) 6; for Swithger, Willibald and Boniface, see Vita Willibaldi c.5, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SS 15/1, Hanover 1887, 104. On Swithger's connections in this area, A. Kraus, Der heilige Willibald von Eichstätt. Person, Zeit, Werk, in: Der hl. Willibald – Klosterbischof
Boniface, the former spiritual patron of Grifo. Figures such as Swithger looked out of Bavaria into the very heart of the Carolingian family. Bavaria plugged into Frankish networks. The *Annales regni Francorum* tell us that many Franks joined Grifo in Bavaria: *copiae de Francia ad eum confuebant*. Secondly, after the Saxon and Bavarian episodes, Pippin ‘mercifully’ gave Grifo Le Mans with ‘twelve counties’. We do not know any details of Grifo’s brief tenure there but we can see his being there as part of the tightening of the Carolingian grip on this area. Historians have referred to „the secularised bishops of Neustria who did not easily acknowledge the Arnulfings’ rising star“. But it may be that bishop Gauciolenus of Le Mans and his brother Charivius were supporters of Grifo and that is why they resisted Pippin in 752 (or 751) when he led an army into Maine. Ordained by Bishop Hugo of Rouen (a Carolingian), and son of Charles Martel’s man Rotgarius, Gauciolenus was no anti-Arnulfing. He may have temporarily offended Pippin, and the root of that offence may have lain in support for Grifo but that only shows how firmly Maine had been pulled into the Carolingian *mouvance*.

For our third example, we look south of the Alps. A letter from Pope Zacharias (750/751) refers to the efforts of Carloman and the abbot of Monte Cassino to bring about peace between Pippin and Grifo. What matters for us here is not the murky question of Carloman’s motivation but the nature of communication networks and what is transmitted along them. The name of Grifo resounds in the papal mouth to be broadcast to the letter’s addressees *(omnia sacerdotibus presbyteris Francorum)*, a broadcast that reveals that the wires between Monte Cassino, Rome and Francia...
were humming and transmitting news of Grifo. Carloman appears as not only a political actor, but as one of the points of communication. Matthias Becher is right to stress the dynastic element in all this (Carloman and Grifo worried about Pippin: this was an affair among the sons of Charles Martel) but we should note how this letter instructs its audience in the Carolingian nature of the world. The prelates of the Franks are being taught the necessity for peace but are also being given a definition of what peace is: harmony in the Carolingian house. From Rome to the Frankish churches, Grifo helps keep attention focused on that house.

Our fourth and last example is the death of Grifo. As is well known, Grifo died in 753, killed in battle while on his way to Lombardy in order to stir up more trouble for Pippin, according to the Continuator of Fredegar. This source also tells us of other casualties: Counts Theuodoenus of Vienne and Fredericus of Transjura fell fighting against him. The Fredegar Continuator makes explicit what should be obvious to us anyway: the importance of communications. As he says, Pippin heard the news (in Bonn) from a nuntius veniens [...] ex partibus Burgundiae. But news must surely also have travelled the other way; the counts guarding the strategically vital approaches to the Alpine passes must have been put on the alert to watch for Grifo. In other words, the worries felt at Pippin's court were transmitted to remote regions. Again, the name of Grifo had been broadcast. Counts Theuodoenus and Fredericus knew their duty. Theuodoenus may have belonged to an old family with roots in Merovingian service but his focus was now on the Carolingians. The killing of Grifo in Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne by loyal men of Pippin III was another chapter in the drawing in of this part of Provence into the Carolingian world, a process whose earlier stages have been studied by Patrick Geary.

Let me recapitulate and sum up this view of Grifo. We have been able to associate a number of members of the aristocracy with him: the three counts of the 741 charter; the count of Paris; Count Swithger; Bishop Gauciolenus and his brother, as well as

43 Carloman was seeking to ally with Grifo in a bid to check Pippin. BECHER, Drogo (cf. note 11) 151.
44 The letter was picked up on the sensitive radar of the abbey of St Denis; it is preserved in the ninth-century St Denis formulary, see J. STORY, Cathwulf, Kingship and the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis, in: Speculum 74 (1999) 1-21, at 19f. for the abbey's Italian interests. The letter's place in the manuscript is discussed at 16f. where, however, it is wrongly ascribed to the Codex Carolinus; further on the manuscript, see M. GARRISON, Letters to a king and biblical exempla. The examples of Cathwulf and Clemens, in: Early Medieval Europe 7 (1998) 305-328, 317-319.
45 Fredegar, Chronicae cont. c. 35, ed. WALLACE-HADRILL (cf. note 4) 103; Annales Mettenses priores a. 751, ed. SIMSON (cf. note 18) 43.
46 Fredegar, Chronicae cont. c. 35, ed. WALLACE-HADRILL (cf. note 4) 103.
47 WERNER, Bedeutende Adelsfamilien (cf. note 3) 105; IDEM, Important noble families (cf. note 3) 190 note 37.
Boniface and various members of the Carolingian family. Such connections have stretched from the Paris-Laon area to Bavaria and Neustria, not to mention other spheres. All this gives weight to what the sources tell us about Grifo’s ability to attract support. Even the *Annales Mettenses priores* admit this, though they typically try to minimise the substantial nature of that support by painting his followers as, for example, young and immature: *plurimi iuvenes ex nobili genere Francorum inconstantia duci*. Perhaps his followers in 748 were indeed iuvenes but, if so, some observations by Karl Leyser are pertinent here. Commenting on Liudolf’s rising against his father Otto I in 953-4, Leyser noted that “Liudolf assembled a splendid band of youthful followers, made up of Saxon, Frankish, Suabian and Bavarian nobles. In this way he, the *frondeur*, did as much to foster new unities within his heterogeneous entourage as the king did in his.” The same can also surely be said of Grifo and his followings. We can surely speak of a Grifo ‘saga’, the stories of his journeys and escapes, circulating among his followers and enemies. We have looked at formal news networks (e.g., the papal letter) but we know that news of high-ranking Carolingians travelled out from centres such as court and monastery. We should remember how ninth-century Latin poetry recalled and glorified the loyal follower who rescued the empress Judith from captivity in Italy. We should remember how the Anglo-Saxon bishop Wilfrid told one of his kinsmen the epic story of his life while they were out riding one day and we would do well to recall the recent characterisation of orally transmitted material in the Carolingian world as “royal, dynastic and Frankish”. Nor need Grifo simply have schooled his followers in *inconstantia*. The letter of Boniface had been full of programmatic advice for a Christian ruler. The admonitions of the holy man may have sunk in and teaching their aristocrats a sense of Christian duty was a task seriously undertaken by Carolingian rulers in this period, as we shall see.

Grifo’s career spanned at least a decade and touched a wide range of places and personnel. To conspire with Grifo against his brothers was in fact to conspire to make the Carolingians the central figures in the political landscape. Grifo’s drama unfolded on stages in Paris-Laon, Saxony, Bavaria, western Neustria, Aquitaine and Provence. As Pippin and his army passed through Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne a brief time later, they...
would have seen where Pippin’s gallant followers and the overweening Grifo had fallen. Pippin can only have looked upon the site with relief but we can see that Grifo, even in the very place and manner of his death, had helped build a world where the aristocracy looked to Carolingians for leadership. What turned out to be the final phase of Grifo’s career coincided with Pippin’s move towards kingship and the reappearance of Carloman on the scene (who was also to vanish from the political scene around Vienne). Grifo (and Carloman) acted as a Carolingian lightning conductor for any aristocratic unease over Pippin’s transformation. He foreshadowed, and helped make possible, the career of the Reichsaristokratie.

This was not, of course, how Pippin saw things. He would have been aware of the amount of opposition he faced, and his attitude to it can be seen in, for example, his wrath at the treacherous antics of the counts of Bourges and the Auvergne in the 760s. But even outright anti-Carolingian opposition could be made to contribute to a system of Carolingian authority and legitimacy, if it could be overcome. The case of Wulfoadus illustrates this point. Wulfoadus belonged to a family of magnates in south Austrasia that was hostile to the Carolingians / Arnulfings. He built a fortification in the pagus of Verdun (where the Carolingians had little family property and relied on fiscal resources for their ‘presence’) as a rallying-point for Pippin’s enemies (nostros inemicos), possibly in the 740s. Pippin cracked down on him with royal Frankish justice according to a charter of 755. But this same charter reveals that Wulfoad had friends attached to the new regime. Abbot Fulrad of St Denis (who did have Alsace connections) interceded for him. It is tempting to imagine the Inszenierung of this intercession (and/or deditio?) but we have no details. What we do know is that Fulrad’s intercession was successful and that St Denis gained property, Wulfoadus gained his life and Pippin was able to present all this in the charter of 755 as a manifestation

55 Fredegar, Chronicae cont. c. 37f., ed. WALLACE-HADRILL (cf. note 4) 105, 107.
56 Fredegar, Chronicae cont. c. 42, ed. WALLACE-HADRILL (cf. note 4) 110f.
57 Wulfoad’s activities are described in Pippin’s charter MGH DD Karolinarum 1, no. 8, ed. MÜHLBACHER (cf. note 15) 12f.; also published as Chartae Latinae Antiquiores 15, no. 599, ed. H. ATSMA/J. VÉZIN (cf. note 15). Wulfoad’s actions and their penalty are dated to the early 740s by J. SEMMLER, Pippin und die fränkischen Klöster, in: Francia 3 (1975) 87-146, 99f., but the charter’s reference to Fulrad’s intervention may point to a later date. Wulfoad was a member of a south Austrasian family hostile to the Carolingians and strong around Verdun; he was related through his wife to the Etichonen, see I. HEIDRICHS, Titulatur und Urkunden der arnulfingischen Hausmeier, in: Archiv für Diplomatik 11/12 (1965/1966) 71-279, 213-218; EBLING, Die inneraustrasiatische Opposition (cf. note 2) 300-302. On the balance of aristocratic and Pippinid properties in this area, W. HAURRICH, Die Urkunde Pippins des Mittleren und Plektrods für St-Vanne in Verdun (702), in: Francia 13 (1985) 1-66, 21-23 with map at 24; see also G. HALSALL, Settlement and Social Organization. The Merovingian region of Metz, Cambridge 1995, 13f.
58 Pippin’s charter MGH DD Karolinarum 1, no. 8, ed. MÜHLBACHER (cf. note 15) 12f.; on Fulrad and this area, J. FLECKENSTEIN, Fulrad von St. Denis und der fränkische Ausgriff in den süddeutschen Raum, in: Studien und Vorarbeiten, ed. TELLENBACH (cf. note 3) 9-39, and A. STOCLET, Le temporel de Saint-Denis du VIIe au
of royal mercy that balanced the judgement of the Franks. Further, the charter is suffused with an atmosphere of Carolingian dynastic legitimacy. The property of the traitor was now in the hands of a community enjoined to pray ‘for us and for our sons and for the stability of the kingdom of ours and of the Franks’. We have to imagine that hard fighting and negotiating some time before its issue lay behind this charter but in 755, after the papal visit, Pippin could be portrayed as merciful even to former hard-line opponents.

If opposition, resentment and resistance should not be forgotten, neither should their significance be exaggerated. Not all of Alsace resisted the new Carolingian regime. More generally, we can, in fact, find an esprit de corps based on loyal service to the Carolingians among the aristocracy. This was created in a number of ways. I shall look briefly at two, which we can label, broadly, as sacred and secular. Mary Garrison has recently commented on the importance of the shift of the ‘Marchfield’ to May in Pippin’s reign; this move, designed to ‘diminish the likelihood of war during Lent [...] surely affected the mass of aristocratic Franks [...] education for a new identity among the warriors had begun'. The roots of this education lay in the church councils held under Carloman and Pippin. What is striking there is the expressing, even before Pippin becomes king, of a moral identity for the aristocracy, secular as well as spiritual, that is to be articulated within the framework of obedience to the new dynasty. The Concilium Germanicum claims that aecclesiastica religio dissipata in diebus praeterorum principum (i.e. non-Carolingian rulers). Similarly at Estinnes, not only are moral instructions issued to counts but Carloman recalls decrees of his father (quod et pater meus ante praecipiebat); the counts are thus being encouraged to see themselves as serving a line of pious rulers. Counts and lay magnates are to be officers in a Christian


59 Pippin’s charter MGH DD Karolinorum 1, no. 8, ed. MOHLBACHER (cf. note 15) 12f.; the model for this charter, a charter issued for St Denis in 751 while Pippin was still mayor, did not have the possessive pronoun applied to the kingdom and simply requested prayers pro nos vel filios nostros seu pro stabilitate regni Francorum. Pippin’s mayoral charter MGH DD Imperii 1, no. 23, ed. PERTZ (cf. note 14) 23f., and also: Die Urkunden der Arnulfinger no. 23, ed. HEIDRICH (cf. note 14) 113-117.

60 M. GARRISON, The Franks as the New Israel? Education for an identity from Pippin to Charlemagne, in: Uses of the Past, ed. HEN/INNES (cf. note 4) 114-161, 135f.


62 Concilium Lifinense (Estinnes) c. 1, c. 4, ed. WERMINGHOFF, MGH Concilia 2/1 (cf. note 61) 6f. Ver: Concilium Vernense, ed. A. BORRETTI, MGH Capitularia Regum Francorum 1, Hanover 1883, 33-37. The author of the prologue to this council text was Baddilo, who also was the mind behind the famous revised prologue of the 760s to Lex Salica and can thus be seen as an ideologue of Pippin’s kingship, even if the
Towards a Carolingian Aristocracy

society, points stressed in the council of Ver (755) for example. A generation later, Alcuin was to sound a fully developed version of the embryonic ideas of the 740s and 750s in texts such as his treatise for Count Wido and his letter to Count Maginarius: *fidelis esto ad dominos, quos dedit tibi Deus*.

All this provides a context that may help us understand something of what the papal visit to Francia of 753-754 meant for the aristocracy. Of course, Jörg Jarnut is right to claim in a well-known article that, despite the impressive ceremonial of the papal visit, much of the aristocracy remained unpersuaded of the need to mount military action against the Lombards. Nonetheless, the visit was an event that took place in the exalted spiritual atmosphere that the aristocracy was being taught to breathe in these years. After all, members of the aristocracy, such as Ruthard and Autchar, travelled to Italy as Pippin's envoys. A glimpse of the impact of Pope Stephen's visit on the aristocracy can be caught in the fact that Gerard, count of Paris, named his son Stephen and the pope may well have baptised the boy in 754. Subsequent papal letters reiterated the heady message of the exalted duties of the Frankish aristocracy (and some such letters pre-dated 754).

But the ceremonies of 754 and the relationship of the Franks with the papacy had a sharp dynastic focus. If the *Clausula de unctione Pippini* is a problematic source, its claim that the pope blessed the *principes Francorum* at St Denis and commanded them only to have kings from Pippin's line is surely 'essentially authentic', in Rosacogent arguments of M. Garrison on the limited audience for the sophisticated products of Baddilo deserve attention, Garrison, *The Franks as the New Israel*? (cf. note 60) 132-34; for a broader view, see B. Merta, *Politische Theorie in den Königsurkunden Pippins I.*, in: Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 100 (1992) 117-131.


See, for example, *Codex Carolinus* ep. 3, 5, 9, 10 and 39, ed. W. Gundlach, MGHEpp. 3, Berlin, 1892, 479-488, 498-503, 551-552. Garrison, *The Franks as the New Israel?* (cf. note 60) 125, argues that papal letters had a very limited circulation, but their arrival at court would have publicised their general tenor and the fact that those letters cited were addressed to the leading men of the Frankish kingdom and not simply to Pippin would have had an impact on Frankish political culture. As R. McKitterick points out, some letters reflect contact between pope and Franks rather than a contact focused exclusively on the ruler, McKitterick, *Illusion of Royal Power* (cf. note 8) 9f. Also relevant here is the letter of 748 from pope Zacharias to thirteen named *viri magnifici*, S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae ep. 83, ed. Tangl. (cf. note 19) 184-187; on these men, see K. Bosl, Franken um 800, Munich 21969, 115ff. and D. Bullough, Albinus delicious regis. Alcuin of York and the Shaping of the Early Carolingian Court, in: *Institutionen, Kultur und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter*. Festschrift für Josef Fleckenstein zu seinem 65. Geburtstag, ed. L. Fenske/W. Rösener/T. Zotz, Sigmaringen 1984, 73-92, 87 note 48.
mond McKitterick's phrase. It was the five-year-old Charlemagne who greeted the pope at Ponthion and it was he and his three-year-old brother who were among the central figures of the ceremonies at St Denis. The doughty warrior commander abbot Wulfard of St Martin's found himself acting as courier in 758 to the pope on behalf of an infant girl, Pippin's daughter Gisela. The experienced diplomats and politicians of the Franks had to learn that they now served Carolingian children, who represented and guaranteed their future. We might see a culmination in this schooling of the aristocracy in appreciating the sacred dynastic aura around the new royal family in the great charter for Prüm issued by Pippin in 762. Here some twelve counts, at least half of whom had been in Carolingian service for a decade, stand as witness (with eight bishops) to Pippin's presentation, in the course of a grant to a sacred dynastic site, of both his sons as future rulers of the Frankish realm.

The dynasty's future hold over the aristocracy was not simply based on prayers and we turn now to our final section, the secular element of the esprit de corps. The Prüm grant, for example, was probably also a celebration of military victory in Aquitaine and war and treasure played a key part in the attraction of a following. But there was also a less spectacular side to service with a ruler that was just as important. For example, serving together as escorts for pope Stephen II in 753-4 helped foster the links between Count Ruthard and Abbot Fulrad that led to their mutual benefit in areas such as Alsace.

67 De unctione Pippini regis, ed. G. WARTZ, MGH SS 15, Hanover 1887, 1; McKITTERICK, Illusion of Royal Power (cf. note 8).
68 Vita Stephani II c. 25-27, ed. L. DUCHESNE, Le Liber pontificalis 1 (cf. note 9) 447f.
70 Pippin's charter MGH DD Karolinorum I, no. 16, ed. MUHLBACHER (cf. note 15) 21-25. Five witnesses to this 762 charter, or witnesses with names identical to theirs, also appear in Pippin's 753 charter for St Denis (MGH DD Karolinorum 1, no. 6, ed. MUHLBACHER (cf. note 15) 9-11); Baugulf, Drogo, Gerhard, Ruthard (Ruthard also appears in Pippin’s 752 charter MGH DD Karolinorum 1, no. 1, ed. MUHLBACHER (cf. note 15) 3f.; see M. BORGOLTE, Die Grafen Alemanniens in merowingischer und karolingischer Zeit. Eine Prosopographie, Sigmaringen 1986, 229-230) and Wulfarsius. The Gunbertus and Troianius of Pippin's 762 charter appear in the 748 letter of pope Zacharias (cf. above note 66). Several of the bishops listed in this charter are also listed in the Attigny 'prayer-bond', see K. SCHMIN/O. G. OEXLE, Voraussetzung und Wirkung des Gebetsbundes von Attigny, in: Francia 2 (1974) 71-122. I intend to discuss the context of the 762 charter more fully elsewhere.
71 Military victory and the gaining of plunder, including humans, are key elements in the account of Pippin's reign produced under Nibelung, son of Childerbrand, Fredegar, Chronicae cont. c. 35, 37f., 42-44, 48, ed. WALLACE-HADRIEL (cf. note 4) 103, 106-108, 111-113 and 117.
72 FLECKENSTEIN, Fulrad von St. Denis (cf. note 58) 28; BORGOLTE, Grafen Alemanniens (cf. note 70) 229-236, 282-287.
Towards a Carolingian Aristocracy

But if fortunate aristocrats enriched themselves in Carolingian service, they also served. Matthew Innes rightly notes that Pippin's reign lacks "a fully articulated hierarchy controlled by the centre but [has] a series of powerful patrons like Chancor and Fulrad at the apex of regional elites and binding them to the centre". A brief survey, however, of some of the activities of men such as Chancor, as well as some lesser lights, reveals the existence of, if not a Dienstadel, an aristocracy engaged in the routine business of service. This is not yet a world of routinization and bureaucracy but it is one in which loyal service is a component of aristocratic identity and it is relevant here to ponder K. F. Werner's claim that Pippin's reign sees the term optimates yield to comites and fideles with their firm overtones of office-holding hierarchy and service.

This is a world of unspectacular and unglamorous tasks allotted to omnes missi nostri discurrentes, such as the investigation of property belonging to the church of Macon by two missi (a count and an abbot) as recorded in the Breve studied by Ingrid Heidrich or the investigation of property claims of St Denis undertaken by missi sent per diversos pagos by (mayor) Pippin in 751. Pippin's charters reveal the names of some 30 fideles involved in the routine business of the lordship of the ruler, hearing disputes over rights to property and revenues etc. Some half-dozen of these men appear in more than one post-751 charter, giving us a tantalising glimpse of aristocratic court personnel. This is also a court to which aristocratic children now came to be educated, or indoctrinated, in Carolingian ways along with young Carolingians of the royal line or of branch lines (e.g. Witiza, Adalhard and Angilbert).

---

73 INNES, State and Society (cf. note 4) 180.
75 I. HEIDRICH, Das Breve der Bischofskirche von Macon aus der Zeit König Pippins (751-766), in: Francia 24 (1997) 17-37, 23-25; Pippin's mayoral charter MGH DD Imperii 1, no. 23, ed. PERTZ (cf. note 14) 23f., and also in: Die Urkunden der Arnulfinger no. 23, ed. HEIDRICH (cf. note 14) 113-117; see also HEIDRICH, Titelatur und Urkunden (cf. note 57) 163. On the incorporation of bishops and abbots into Carolingian government, see the deft summary by NELSON, Kingship and royal government (cf. note 4) 388-392.
76 Except where explicitly stated, numbers refer to Pippin's charters as edited by MGH DD Karolinorum 1, ed. MöHRACHER (cf. note 15) with the year of issue in brackets. Baugulf: no. 6 (753), no. 16 (762). Drogo: no. 6 (753), no. 16 (762). Gerhardus: no. 1 (752), no. 6 (753) and no. 16 (762) and he also appears in a charter of Pippin's in 748, MGH DD Imperii 1, no. 18, ed. PERTZ (cf. note 14) and: Die Urkunden der Arnulfinger no. 18, ed. HEIDRICH (cf. note 14). Giselharius: no. 6 (753), no. 12 (759). Helmgaudus: no. 1 (752), no. 6 (753), no. 12 (759). Milo: no. 1 (752), no. 6 (753), no. 12 (759). Rauho: no. 6 (753), no. 12 (759), no. 22 (766), no. 23 (766) and he may appear in a charter of Pippin's from 748, MGH DD Imperii 1, no. 18, ed. PERTZ (cf. note 14) and: Die Urkunden der Arnulfinger no. 18, ed. HEIDRICH (cf. note 14). Ruthard: no. 1 (752), no. 6 (753), no. 12 (759), no. 16 (762). Wibertus (count of the palace): no. 1 (752), no. 6 (753), no. 12 (759), no. 27 (768). Other faithful men could also be mentioned here, such as Warin and Ruthard. On the court chapel J. FLECKENSTEIN, Die Hofkapelle der deutschen Könige 1.Teil: Grundlegung. Die Karolingische Hofkapelle (Schriften der MGH 16/1) Stuttgart 1959.
77 For Witiza, see Ardo, Vita Benedicti Abbatis Anianensis et Indensis c. 1, ed. G. WARTZ, MGH SS 15, Hanover 1887, 201; for Adalhard, see Paschasius Radbertus, Vita Sancti Adalhardi 7, ed. J.-P. MAGNE, Patrologia Latina 120, Paris 1879, 1511, with B. KASTEN, Adalhard von Corbie, Düsseldorf 1986, 15; for Angilbert, see
Away from the court, leading magnates were absorbed into a system whose linchpin was the Carolingian ruler. Count Chancor (founder of Lorsch), for example, is too great a man to be seen merely as a servant to the Carolingians but in Alemannia, where he was a count from 743 to 758, he appears in charters that relentlessly track the rise of the Carolingians to royal authority. As count, Chancor was ensnared in unexciting but regular transactions and documents that pivoted around Carolingian authority for their legitimacy. This can be seen for other aristocrats in other St Gall charters for this period, to remain only with them for now, as in count Gozpert’s involvement in the grant of estates by a group of brothers to St Gall in 765 or in the humdrum business of a Thursday in 764 when fiscal fines were spelt out under the authority of count Warin. Counts such as Chancor were involved in a variety of transactions in spheres such as administration and law and were thus also woven into textual representations of Carolingian authority. This understanding of the shift of authority from Merovingian kings to a king called by the new royal name of Pippin was not confined to the ranks of the high aristocracy. A knowledgeable scribe such as the priest Theutger, active in writing out the charters of the abbey of Weissenburg from 731 to 757 (and he may have been active as early as 712), experienced this shift and had to record it in dating formulas which moved from the reign of Theuderic IV to Carolingian mayors of the palace back to the Merovingian Childeric III and finally to the Carolingian king Pippin. A figure such as Theutger did not simply reflect these changes but actively helped to define and broadcast them to a wider community.


Towards a Carolingian Aristocracy

We cannot claim that all aristocratic dislike or resentment of the new dynasty was extinguished by 768. The revolt of Hardrad reveals fierce discontent with the Carolingian ruler as late as 785. Hardrad's and his fellow conspirators' hostility to the new dynasty can be seen from the fact that they do not seem to have backed any other Carolingian and we know how hard Charlemagne had to work to incorporate the aristocracy into a framework of oaths of obedience.\(^{81}\) Also, alternatives existed such as the courts of the duke of Bavaria and of the king of the Lombards. Indeed it was to the Lombard court that Autchar fled in 771 to escape Charlemagne but he fled, it is worth stressing, with the widow and children of his late Carolingian master.\(^{82}\) Nonetheless, for the bulk of the aristocracy in 768 there cannot have been any alternative to the sons of Pippin who had now grown up and been provided with wives from (presumably) the ranks of the aristocracy.\(^{83}\) We can thus end by saying that Pippin's reign sees the origin of a recognisably Carolingian aristocracy, with it being helpful here to understand 'origin' in Walter Benjamin's terms: "Origin, although a thoroughly historical category, nonetheless has nothing to do with beginnings [...] The term origin does not mean the process of becoming of that which has emerged, but much more that which emerges out of the process of becoming and disappearing".\(^{84}\)

---


\(^{82}\) Vita Hadriani I c. 9, ed. L. DUCHESNE, Le Liber pontificalis 1 (cf. note 9) 488.

\(^{83}\) \(\ldots\) iam Dei voluntate et consilio coniugio legitimo ex praecinctione genitoris vestri copulati estis, accipientes \(\ldots\) ex ipsa nobilissima Francorum gente, pulchristissimas conjuges, Codex Carolinus ep. 45, ed. GUNDLACH (cf. note 66) 561; LE JAN, Famille et pouvoir (cf. note 18) 274; we know little of these women's families as NELSON, Frankish World (cf. note 8) 232, points out. Gerberga, Carloman's, wife may have had links with Corbie: E. EWIG, Rheinischer Besitz westfränkischer Kirchen, in: Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte 10 (1958) 341-346, and reprinted in: E. EWIG, Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien. Gesammelte Schriften (1952-1973) (Beihöfte der Francia 3/2), ed. H. ATSMA, Munich 1979, 182-188, 187. Himiltrud, Charlemagne's wife, may have had Alsace connections, KASTEN, Königssöhne (cf. note 8) 144.