BEFORE FRANCE & GERMANY

THE CREATION & TRANSFORMATION OF THE MEROVINGIAN WORLD

PATRICK J. GEARY

BEFORE FRANCE
AND GERMANY

BEFORE FRANCE AND GERMANY

The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World

PATRICK J. GEARY

To My Father
Walter Thomas Geary, Sr.

Preface

The Germanic world was perhaps the greatest and most endur-
ing creation of Roman political and military genius. That this
offspring came in time to replace its creator should not obscure
the fact that it owed its very existence to Roman initiative, to the
patient efforts of centuries of Roman emperors, generals, soldiers,
landlords, slave traders, and simple merchants to mold the (to
Roman eyes) chaos of barbarian reality into forms of political,
social, and economic activity which they could understand and,
perhaps, control. The barbarians themselves were for the most
part particularly eager to participate in this process, to become
"authentic" peoples, that is, to achieve structures which made
sense within the seductive orbit of classical civilization. So suc-
cessful was this effort that already from late antiquity it was im-
possible for the Goths, Burgundians, Franks, and other "peoples"
who had become masters in the Western Roman Empire to un-
derstand themselves and their past apart from Roman categories
of ethnography, politics, and custom, just as it was impossible for
them to prosper apart from Roman traditions of agriculture and
commerce or to exercise power apart from Roman traditions of
politics and law. Thus did such classical ethnographers as Pliny
and Tacitus present the history of the barbarian peoples in terms
of Greco-Roman categories of tribes, peoples, and nations and
describe their religious and social customs either as assimilable
to or in contrast with values and vices of Roman society. When,
in the sixth century, authors such as Cassiodorus and Gregory of
Tours wrote the histories of now victorious barbarian peoples,

both they and their Romanized barbarian informants used these same categories to render intelligible their past and present.

Since both the historical and ethnographic or sociological disciplines which now dominate scholarship were the direct descendants of these very traditions, it has been quite difficult for modern historians to step back and view the origins of European society apart from these same categories and structures. Only in recent decades have anthropologists and ethnographers, by focusing on the internal structures of non-Western traditional societies, begun to show how scholars can break out of the perceptual categories of the Western experience not only to understand other societies but, to some extent, the distant origins of our own. Assisting this process is the work of archaeologists, whose evidence is the only source for understanding the non-literate world of barbarian society not filtered through the language, and thus the categories, of Greco-Roman culture. As a result, our understanding of how to interpret the sparse evidence of the barbarian world of late antiquity is in a process of transformation.

However, even as one begins to reinterpret this world in light of modern ethnography and archaeology, one is constantly reminded of the deep penetration of Roman culture into this world long before Roman conquests or barbarian migrations. The Roman creation of the barbarian world was not simply a perceptual one in which the Romans processed the data of contact with barbarians through the grid of Roman values. Roman perceptions and influences, both active and passive, transformed and structured this world even while trying to understand it to an extent only recently beginning to be recognized. This process is particularly evident in the case of the Franks, whose origins and early history form the subject of this book. Their very existence as well as every phase of their history makes sense only within the context of Roman presence in northern Europe, for their genesis as a people and gradual transformation into the conquerors of much of Europe were from the start part of the Roman experience. However, this Roman experience is a far cry from the vision most people have of classical Rome. It was part of the provincial Roman world, especially that of late antiquity,

a world in some ways even more alien to modern sensibilities than that of the barbarians.

The history of the barbarian kingdoms and especially that of the Franks is thus a history of the transformation of the Roman provincial world, a process which, while occasionally marked by violent episodes that continue to have reverberations through the Western consciousness, such as the sack of Rome in 410 or the defeat of the last Roman commander of Gaul in 486, is actually much more the history of a gradual and at times imperceptible amalgamation of complex traditions. Its developments are by no means always unidirectional, and the principals, Romans and barbarians, are usually indistinguishable. Rather than marked by great events, this transformation is best followed in incidental details and examples. Where we begin is in a sense arbitrary, just as where we end. We shall start with the first century and the early phase of the Roman invention of the barbarian world, and end by looking forward to 800, when at last the barbarian world feels compelled to reinvent the Roman.

Presenting Merovingian Europe

I am reminded of a particularly vicious academic dispute in the early ninth century, in the course of which Florus of Lyon accused his opponent, Bishop Amalarius of Metz, of the cardinal sin of medieval intellectual activity: originality. In a description of a synod at which the bishop was condemned he explains:

> They asked him where he had read these things. Then he, quite clearly restrained in his speech, responded that he had neither taken them from scripture nor from the teachings handed down from the universal Fathers, or even from heretics, but rather he had read them in his own heart.

The assembled fathers replied: "Here in truth is the spirit of error!"[1]

This author would certainly stand acquitted by Florus and the synod. The unfortunate constraints imposed on this book, which is intended as a first introduction to Merovingian history, are such that it contains few notes and only a brief bibliograph-

ical orientation. Those familiar with the literature on Merovingian Europe will find little here that is novel: at every point I have drawn on an enormous body of literature, largely by Continental scholars. The justification for writing is not to launch some new theory about the origins of European civilization, but to make available the vast literature on late antiquity and the early Middle Ages which has, for a variety of reasons, seldom been presented in a manner accessible to a broader audience, particularly to an English-reading one.

Merovingian specialists tend even more than other medievalists to eschew writing for anyone but themselves. Moreover, until quite recently, virtually all of this specialist writing was being done in German and, to a lesser extent, French. Thus the dominant understanding of this crucial period continues to be that formulated over fifty years ago under the twin influences of nostalgia for the high cultural tradition of antiquity and of modern nationalistic fervor fanned by the fires of French–German hostilities. To the French, the Merovingian period has too often been seen as the first time (of many) when crude and faithless Germanic hordes would invade and occupy Gaul, plunging this civilized and urbane world into three centuries of darkness. For some German scholars of the past, the Merovingians represented the triumph of new and vigorous peoples over the decadent successors of Rome. The elements of these viewpoints have been eroded bit by bit, and little now remains. However word of this demise has not reached much beyond academic circles, much less word of the new understanding of this crucial period which has taken its place. I hope to present the results of these important reappraisals and evaluations to a wider audience with little or no previous familiarity with this period of Continental history.

While I have been extremely dependent on the great scholars—Eugen Ewig, Friedrich Prinz, Karl Ferdinand Werner, Michael Wallace-Hadrill, among others—I have exercised selective judgment in interpreting, arbitrating, and selecting elements of these scholars' work. No area of Merovingian history is free of controversy, and every topic treated in this book should be accompanied by a historiographical essay and could be replaced by a series of arguments contradicting its conclusions. In some places,

opposing positions have been mentioned, in other places they
have been passed over because of limited space. Thus, while the
individual details are overwhelmingly derivative, the synthesis
itself may prove somewhat novel and certainly controversial. The
best one can hope is that other specialists will be so enraged by
the errors, omissions, and distortions they find herein that they
will be inspired to write their own, better accounts of Europe be-
fore France and Germany.

Professor Peter Brown first urged me to write this book, and I
am grateful to him for his encouragement and advice. Professors
Maria Cesa, Friedrich Prinz, and Falko Daim have read portions
of the manuscript and are responsible for much of value in it.
My students at the University of Florida, among whom an early
draft of the manuscript circulated, also provided valuable criti-
cism. Professors Barbara Rosenwein and Edward Peters read the
completed manuscript and corrected numerous errors and in-
consistencies. Those that remain are the fault of no one but
myself.

*Gainesville, Florida*   P. J. G.
August 1987

Contents

BEFORE FRANCE
AND GERMANY

Roman Empire
IN THE FOURTH CENTURY

ATLANTIC
OCEAN

ENGLISH CHANNEL

BAY OF BISCAY

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

BLACK SEA

Numbered Provinces:
1. Pennine and Graian Alps
2. Viennensis
3. Narbonensis II
4. Maritime Alps
5. Valeria
6. Haemimontus
7. Rhodope

0   200
Miles

Abbreviations:
R. = Ripensis(e)
M. = Mediterraneum(ca)
Pat. = Paticana
S. = Salutaris
An. = Annonarium
Sub. = Suburbicarium
* = denotes Proconsular Province

DIOCESE OF BRITAIN
(BRITANNIA)

FRISIANS
SAXONS
FRANKS
THURINGIANS
ALEMANNI
RUGII
SCYTHIA
TERVINGIANS
GREUTUNGS

PREFECTURE OF GAUL

PREFECTURE OF ITALY, AFRICA, AND ILLYRICUM

After 395
PREFECTURE
OF ILLYRICUM

PREFECTURE
OF THE EAST

DIOCESE OF SPAIN
(HISPANIA)

Lusitania
Baetica
Gallaecia
Tarraconensis
Carthaginiensis
Baleares
Tingi (Tangier)

Duero
Tagus (Tajo)
Ebro
Cartagena (Carthago Nova)
Tarragona (Tarraco)

DIOCESE OF AFRICA
Mauretania Tingitana
Mauretania Caesariensis
Mauretania Sitifensis
Africa Proconsularis
(Carthago)
Numidia
Byzacena
Tagaste
(Hippo Regius)
Carthage
(Carthago)

DIOCESE OF SEPTEM PROVINCIARUM
(VIENNENSIS)
Novem-populana
Aquitanica I
Aquitanica II
Narbonensis I
Viennensis
Bordeaux (Burdigala)
Toulouse (Tolosa)
Narbonne (Narbo)
Marseilles (Massilia)
Lyon (Lugdunum)
Vienne (Vienna)

DIOCESE OF GAUL (GALLIA)
Lugdunensis III
Lugdunensis II
Lugdunensis Senonia
Belgica II
Belgica I
Germania I
Germania II
Maxima Sequanorum
Cologne (Colonia Agrippina)
Mainz (Mogontiacum)

Rhine
Weser
Elbe
Oder
Danube
Loire
Seine

DIOCESE OF ITALY
Liguria
Venetia & Istria
Aemilia
Cottian Alps
Raetia I
Raetia II
Noricum R.
Noricum M.
Pannonia I
Valeria
Pannonia II
Savia
Dalmatia
Milan (Mediolanum)
Regensburg (Regina Castra)
Passau (Batavia)
Lorch (Lauriacum)
Budapest (Aquincum)
Carnuntum
Belgrade (Singidunum)

Tuscany & Umbria
Picenum Sub.
Flaminia & Picenum An.
Rome (Roma)
Campania
Samnium
Apulia & Calabria
Lucania & Bruttium
Sardinia
Corsica
Sicily

DIOCESE OF ROME
Naples (Neapolis)

DIOCESE OF PANNONIA

DIOCESE OF MOESIA
Dacia R.
Dacia M.
Dardania
Praevalitana
Moesia
Prima
Scardus

DIOCESE OF MACEDONIA
Epirus Nova
Epirus Vetus
Macedonia
Thessaly
Achaia
Crete

DIOCESE OF THRACE
Europe
Thracia
Haemimontus
Rhodope
Scythia
Moesia
Inferior

DIOCESE OF ASIA
Lydia
Caria
Asia
Phrygia
Pisidia
Pamphylia
Lycia
Lycaonia
Insulae
Cyprus

DIOCESE OF PONTUS
Bithynia
Paphlagonia
Galatia
Pontus
Hellespontus

The Roman West at the End of the Fifth Century

Around A.D. 30, a Roman merchant named Gargilius Secundus purchased a cow from Stelus, a barbarian who lived near the present-day Dutch town of Franeker. The village lies across the Rhine, which then formed the border between the Roman province of Lower Germany and what was known by the Romans as Free Germany. Secundus was probably in the business of supplying the local military garrison, which depended on such petty merchants for fresh meat as well as leather. Roman soldiers ate well, and beef was their favorite food. Moreover, archaeological finds from other points along the Roman fortifications in northern Europe indicate that tanneries erected in the shadow of the Roman frontier fortifications were essential (if not particularly high quality) sources of shoes, tents, harness, and the like not only for the soldiers but also for the civilians who together constituted the avatar of Rome on this furthermost edge of the civilized world. The transaction, which cost the Roman 115 silver *nummi* or cents, was witnessed by two centurions from the First and Fifth Roman Legions and guaranteed by two Roman veterans, Lilus and Duerretus, who had settled after their military service near their former units.[1] The purchase of a single animal was a minor and banal commercial exchange no doubt repeated all along the Roman frontier, or *limes,* which began at the Firth of Clyde in what is now Scotland, crossed Great Britain and the Channel, and then began anew a few miles west of Franeker at the mouth of the Rhine, following that river across northern Europe through what is today Holland and Germany, then into the

Swiss Alps. There it turned east and followed the Danube along
the great Pannonian plain across present-day Austria, Hungary,
and Rumania to the Black Sea—a distance of over 3,000 miles.

At another Roman frontier post, more than 400 years and
1,000 miles distant from this transaction, another group of Ro-
man merchants sought to trade with the barbarians. In the late
fifth century, around the same time that the penultimate emperor
in the West, Romulus Augustulus, was being forced into retire-
ment by the Roman military commander Odoacer, merchants at
Passau-Innstadt approached Severinus, a holy man with a repu-
tation for serving both as protector of the Romans and friend of
the barbarians, and asked him to request Feletheus, the king of
the neighboring barbarian tribe of Rugii, to establish a market
at which the Romans could trade with them. The saint's far-
sighted and blunt reply must have sent a chill through the com-
munity: "The time is approaching when this city will lie aban-
doned just as the other fortifications further up the river already
are. What need therefore is there to provide a place for trade,
where there will no longer be any traders?"[2] By the end of the
fifth century, the legions were gone or would soon be recalled
from the old frontiers, the centuries-old commercial links that
had followed them were rapidly dissolving, and the political and
military power of the Empire had disappeared from all but a
fraction of the West.

The contrast between these two frontier negotiations might be
seen as representative of the decline and fall of the classical
world. The civilized Romans of Passau were about to be overrun
by Feletheus's barbarian hordes, two alien worlds on the brink of
a confrontation that would end civilization in the West for al-
most a millennium. In fact, the realities behind this contrast
were quite different. By the end of the fifth century, twenty-five
generations of barbarians and Romans had so deeply affected
each other that the world of Severinus of Noricum would have
been incomprehensible to Gargilius Secundus, just as that of
Feletheus would have bewildered Stelus. The two worlds had
largely merged into one, as barbarization within the Empire
transformed the Roman world while a concomitant Romaniza-
tion transformed the barbarians even before they set foot inside

the Roman *limes*. One need only consider that the father of Emperor Romulus Augustulus (and quite probably Severinus) had served in the entourage of Attila the Hun and that when the Rugii finally tried to attack the Roman kingdom of Italy, it was at the instigation of the Roman emperor Zeno, to realize that, in the world of late antiquity, earlier categories of civilization and barbarity no longer applied. In this final confrontation, the "barbarian" Rugii were the agents of the central, imperial power while the threat to imperial stability was posed by the "Romans" of the Italian kingdom headed by the patrician Odoacer.

To understand how this transformation took place, the first two chapters of this book will follow the principals involved in these commercial transactions, first the Roman merchants and soldiers and then the barbarian herdsmen, and examine the worlds they and their successors inhabited from the first until the end of the fifth centuries. Because two different perspectives are presented, the accounts will at times overlap and even contradict each other, since the "realities" of the time depend on the perceptions of its inhabitants. Our purpose is to sketch the general outlines of the dynamic social and cultural processes transforming Europe during these centuries. Only with this background can we begin to understand the Franks and their neighbors in the new world of the sixth through eighth centuries.

The Western Provinces

Banal as it was, the exchange near the mouth of the Rhine was nevertheless a microcosm of the relationship between Romans and barbarians all along this vast border, which served not so much to separate two worlds as to provide the structure for their interaction. Hostilities between them, not only in the first century but even in the turbulent fourth and fifth centuries, were never the most frequent form of this interaction. Much more significant than the years of war were the decades and even centuries of peace, during which time the two societies came to resemble each other more than either resembled its own past.

On the Roman side of this frontier a process of civilizing—Romanizing—had been under way for over a century and would

continue for another three. Here on the fringes of the world, where, as Romans were wont to complain, the inhabitants were so primitive that they didn't even drink wine, civilizing had little to do with high culture. Instead, its agents were ordinary people like our cattle merchant and the soldiers he supplied. For such people, mostly peasants from the more settled areas of the West who hoped, after their retirement, to become prosperous farmers in the area of their military service, Roman civilization meant a sort of rough-and-ready literacy good enough for military work but only distantly related to the language taught in the schools of rhetoric; it meant the establishment of creature comforts to ease the gray northern winters, such as baths, arenas, and the like; and it meant the enjoyment of the perquisites of power, available here not only to the wealthy but even to simple soldiers, merchants, and veterans settled around the camps of their old legions.

Still, beyond these material aspects of Roman life, provincial elites in their villas, rhetoricians in the schools of Bordeaux, Lyon, Trier, and other cities, and the cadres of Roman administrators continued to cultivate much of traditional Roman values. These values included first and foremost Roman justice and law. They included a strong adherence to traditional Roman *pietas,* or subordination and dedication to family, religion, and duty. And they included a love of Latin (if not Greek) letters, which were cultivated and supported by the leisured elites of the provinces both as a way of participating in the essence of Roman civilization and, increasingly, as a way of convincing themselves that the essence of this civilization would never slip away. None of these values would ever be entirely abandoned in the western provinces of the Empire.

The conquest of this vast territory had been haphazard and the boundaries the result of Roman reversals rather than intentions. Within Gaul, divided administratively into the provinces of Gallia Narbonensis, under the control of the Roman senate, and Gallia Lugdunensis, Aquitania, and Belgica, all under the control of the emperor, Romanization spread out from administrative cities into the surrounding Celtic countryside. These cities, with their baths, monuments, and theaters, as well as their

schools and temples, provided Roman administrative personnel the essential amenities of civilized life while luring the indigenous Celtic population into the Roman orbit. As elsewhere in the Roman world, these cities had their own local public life centering on the local senate or *curia,* composed of the leading men of the municipality from whose ranks magistrates, called *decurions,* were elected to fill public offices. The municipal government was directly responsible for little other than maintenance of roads and bridges, while individual curials shouldered a variety of other public services *(munera* such as the collection of taxes and fees, maintenance of post animals for the imperial post service, and the entertainment of visiting Roman magistrates).

In spite of the presence throughout Gaul of Celtic workshops producing traditional fine metalwork and textiles, as well as more recently established pottery and glass production modeled on that of Italy and the eastern areas of the Empire, the Gallic and Germanic provinces were overwhelmingly agricultural. Roman surveys and field divisions, whose marks are still visible from the air across much of southern France, formed the basis of the organization of the countryside. Cereals were the main produce in most of Gaul, although viniculture, introduced by the Romans, developed to such a point that the Emperor Domitian (reigned A.D. 81–96) attempted to limit its growth in order to protect Italian wine production. Essentially, however, Gaul posed little threat of economic competition to the rest of the Empire. Fortunes could be made here, but this was possible by production for local consumption and, increasingly, by supplying the Roman armies situated on the Germanic frontier who, from the North Sea to the Danube, looked to Gaul for men and materiel.

Each city was intimately tied to the surrounding countryside, where the leading citizens owned estates or villas. These estates, worked by slaves imported from border areas as well as by free Celtic peasants, could cover thousands of acres and formed the economic basis for the wealthy senatorial families who dominated provincial life. The local aristocracy was composed of those who had gained wealth and prominence through imperial service as well as some local Celts who had risen through civil

service and the military and managed to marry into the Roman
local elite. Such social mobility required the adoption of Roman
religion and the acquisition of a classical education. Thus Celtic
society was drawn at both ends of the spectrum into the Roman
orbit—at the lower end peasants in the villages and hamlets were
integrated into Roman systems of agriculture, and at the top
Celtic elites sought to adopt Roman culture for their sons as
a means of participating in the good life offered in the Roman
world.

Throughout this Romanizing world, the Roman military pres-
ence was everywhere. After the suppression of the uprising under
Vercingétorix in 52 B.C., the Gallic provinces had largely ac-
cepted and even embraced their incorporation into the Empire.
However as one moved north and east toward the Rhine and
Danube, the influence of the military forts, or *castra,* increased
relative to that of the civilian city and villa. The provinces of
Upper and Lower Germany, unlike those of Gaul, were adminis-
tered directly by the military commanders stationed there, evi-
dence of the continued threat to *Romanitas* (a broad concept
that covers everything that refers to Rome) posed by the peoples
across the Rhine. Here, the military was omnipresent—it was
no accident that the two witnesses to the cattle purchase men-
tioned earlier were centurions—and this presence depended on
the more settled regions of Gaul for supplies, for manufactured
goods such as clothing and weapons which could not be pro-
duced locally, and for troops. The legions and settlements of
veterans along the Rhine, like those along the Danube, pro-
tected Roman merchants (such as Secundus) who traded with the
barbarians and secured the nascent Roman agricultural struc-
ture in the borderlands from local anti-Roman uprisings as well
as from lightning raids carried out by young barbarians eager to
acquire booty and glory. More significantly, the presence of the
legions served to discourage the more ominous threat of large-
scale, organized border violations that might threaten the set-
tled areas of Gaul and the Danubian provinces.

During the more than five centuries of Roman presence in the
West, the regions of Britain, Gaul, and Germany were marginal
to Roman interests. The Empire was essentially Mediterranean

and remained so throughout its existence; thus Italy, Spain, and North Africa were the Western areas most vital to it. However, the Empire's cultural, economic, and population centers were the great cities of the East: Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, and later Constantinople. The West boasted only one true city, although admittedly the greatest of them all—Rome. In the first centuries of its Empire, Rome could afford the luxury of maintaining the *Romanitas* of the West. Still, these regions, while supplying the legions of the *limes,* or borders, with men and arms and supporting the local senators with the *otium,* or leisured existence, necessary to lead a civilized life of letters, contributed little to either the cultural or economic life of the Empire.

In the West, the critical frontier was the northern border that followed the Danube. While only three legions were permanently stationed in Britain, and four kept watch on the Rhine, eleven were stationed along the Danube, and for good reason. The great Pannonian plain that runs from the steppes of central Asia to the Alps is one of the great invasion routes of Europe, and the Danube, which it follows, offers not a frontier so much as a water bridge to the Balkans and Italy. Thus the provinces stretching from the Alps to the Black Sea—Rhaetia, Noricum, Pannonia Superior and Inferior, Dacia, and Moesia Superior and Inferior—stood as a vital defense line across the northern half of the Empire. Well into the second half of the second century, the presence of Roman troops along the Rhine–Danube border had discouraged any such movements on the part of the tribes of "Free Germany," although sporadic attempts to test the borders in Upper Germany and Rhaetia, while easily suppressed, would bode ill should the Roman presence be reduced.

Just such a reduction occurred in the 160s, when the attention of the philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius (reigned A.D. 161-180) was drawn to military problems in the eastern part of the Empire. In order to pursue his war against the Parthians, the emperor moved troops from the Rhône and Danube eastward. He did not take many—probably only three legions and those from widely separated regions—but it was enough. During the Parthian war, various barbarian tribes across the Danube, under

the name of the Marcomanni, began a process of consolidation
and military preparation that would soon challenge the Empire.

In the next chapter we shall examine this process from the
perspective of the barbarians. From the Roman perspective, the
rapid change in the barbarian world was significant essentially
because it produced the Marcomannian wars, which began in
166 when over 6,000 barbarians crossed the Danube and began
to devastate the rich Pannonian hinterlands. This first attack
was repelled, but not without difficulty, both because of the
barbarians' strength and because of a plague, probably a form
of smallpox, which the legions returning from the Parthian war
had brought back and which was ravaging the Roman provinces.
Following the restoration of order, Marcus Aurelius planned a
major offensive to drive the barbarians back from the river and
establish a more easily protected frontier in the mountains to
the north, but the Germanic tribes moved too quickly. In 170
an enormous force of Marcomanni and Quadi crossed the Dan-
ube and fought their way across Pannonia, penetrated into Nori-
cum, and finally reached Italy itself, raiding the cities of Aqui-
leia and Oderzo, just north of modern Venice. The barbarians
had arrived in Italy, and although Marcus Aurelius and, after
him, his son Commodus eventually defeated and subdued them,
the Empire would never again be the same.

The Empire from the Third
to the Sixth Centuries

The political history of the late Empire is well-known and need
only be briefly sketched here so that it might be referred to
later in our more systematic examination of Western society
during this period. The pressures of the barbarians along the
Danube and the Parthians in the East accentuated the inherent
instability within the Empire and ushered in a period of po-
litical and economic unrest lasting roughly ninety years (from
the assassination of Commodus in 192 to the ascension of Dio-
cletian in 284) that was referred to as the "time of troubles" or
the "crisis of the third century." During this period, the mili-
tary made and destroyed emperor after emperor in an attempt

to find a leader capable of both enriching the army and leading it to victory against the renewed pressures from the Germanic tribes and Persians. This period of violent conflict between imperial pretenders and their armies, enormous inflation, and general insecurity, ended with the reforms of Diocletian, a soldier from Dalmatia who rose through the ranks to command the imperial bodyguard and ultimately to wear the purple.

Diocletian (reigned 284–305) was able to check the external and internal threats through successful military expeditions as well as by astute diplomacy. In order to deal more effectively with the vast Empire, he made his lieutenant, Maximian, his coruler in the West, giving him the title of Augustus. Around 292 he added two younger associates, Galerius and Constantius, to this joint rulership, giving them the title of Caesar and designating them as their successors. This division of the Empire into East and West and the establishment of the tetrarchy did not become permanent, but in the long run it pointed the way toward a division that was increasingly accentuated in politics, society, and culture over the next centuries.

Diocletian needed more than ten years to reestablish military control over the entire Empire. He also sought to reorganize its administrative and economic structures. He accomplished this by reorganizing the Empire into several prefectures for the East and the West and then further subdividing the Empire into approximately 100 provinces (roughly double the previous number), by separating the military and civil bureaucracies, and by enlarging the latter to handle the increasing load of judicial and financial affairs. We will look at the bureaucracy in more detail later.

Diocletian's efforts to reform the economy through price and wage controls and currency reform met with much less success than his administrative and military measures. The peace during his reign increased prosperity, particularly in the cities, but the accompanying increase in taxes required to finance his expanded bureaucracy and his military severely strained the resources of of the Empire.

The least successful but most notorious program undertaken by Diocletian was his persecution of the Christians. Probably

at the instigation of Caesar Galerius, one of the corulers, he published edicts in 303 that ordered all copies of Scriptures to be surrendered and burnt and places of worship destroyed, forbade assemblies of Christians, depriving them of citizenship, and ordered the arrest of all bishops and clergy. The Great Persecution, pursued with more vigor in the East than the West, ultimately proved ineffectual, although its effects were long felt within the Christian community.

This Christian sect, which had originated as a reform movement within Judaism, had spread to urban centers throughout the Empire by the end of the third century. Its members, united under their bishops, followed a wide variety of occupations and lifestyles, but were united by their private and quasisecret religious rites and beliefs which stood in sharp contrast with those of their neighbors. Their radical and exclusive monotheism, their belief in an eternal afterlife of bliss for the few elect and of eternal torture for the rest of humankind, and their insistence that only those of their cult could achieve this salvation were all likely to build resentment in the rest of society. However, the firmness of their belief in their God, the effectiveness of the tales of miracles worked by Christians, and the convincing manner in which their preachers related such manifestations of power to the content of Christian beliefs helped spread Christianity throughout the urban world and attracted the interest of those most in need of power, the new elites rising during the turmoil of the third century and hoping to rise still further.

In 305 Diocletian and Maximian abdicated and were succeeded by caesars Galerius and Constantius. However, the principle of constitutional succession was disputed by the armies throughout the Empire, who viewed succession as a hereditary right. Following Constantius's death in 306, new wars broke out that lasted until 312 when, at the battle near the Melvian Bridge in the northern suburbs of Rome, Constantine defeated and killed Maxentius, the son of Maximian and his rival in the West. Later, Constantine attributed his victory to the Christian God and within a year he and his Eastern counterpart, Licinius, had granted full toleration to Christianity as well as to all other religions.

Constantine was not the sort to be content with only half an empire; by 324 he had invaded the East and at Chrysopolis he defeated Licinius and his caesar, both of whom he had executed. Shortly after this, he determined to rebuild the city of Byzantium, which lay on the Bosporus and thus commanded the strategic straits between the Mediterranean and Black seas. He gave the magnificently restored and enriched city his own name and established it as a memorial of the final victory of the Christian God. Although initially only an imperial residence such as Trier and Milan in the West and Sardica and Nicomedia in the East, it soon became the "new Rome"—the capital city of the Christian empire.

The dynasty founded by Constantine was plagued by internecine rivalry, and, after the death of Julian in 363, the dynasty founded by Valentinian, a Pannonian soldier, faced the same problems. Valentinian focused on the western half of the Empire then threatened by the Alemanni and Franks, giving the East to his brother Valens. The arrival in the Black Sea area of the Huns in 373 brought renewed pressure on Rome, and the Eastern and Western emperors came increasingly under the control of their military commanders, usually barbarians who had risen in the service of the Empire. Moreover, following Valens's defeat and death in the battle of Adrianopolis in 378 at the hands of the Goths, a decisive event which we shall consider below, his successor, Theodosius, concluded a treaty with the Goths that allowed them to settle within the Empire—an ominous precedent. Although in the East the tendency to rely on barbarian commanders and their followers was checked by a reaction against barbarian commanders around 400, the long-term military crisis and the poverty of the public treasury in the West brought about a continuous increase of the influence of these individuals and their armies. By the time that the Scirian officer and king Odoacer deposed the emperor Romulus Augustulus in 476 and ceased to recognize the pretender Nepos four years later, the office of emperor had long lost its meaning in the West, as it was almost entirely commanded by barbarian kings whose de facto positions were enhanced by Roman titles granted by the Eastern emperors. Such barbarian leaders were,

in the eyes of the emperors in Constantinople, more legitimate than such "Romans" as Syagrius, who was overthrown by the Franks in 486, or his contemporary, the semimythical Ambrosius Aurelianus, whose resistance to the Saxons in Britain would give rise to the legend of King Arthur.

The Transformation of Western Society

The barbarization of the West had not begun with the Germanic settlements of the late fourth and fifth centuries or with the crises of the third century or even with the Marcomannian wars. Nor was it exclusively a process of implantation of barbarian peoples and their customs within the Empire. The West was always primarily Celtic and Germanic, and from the third through fifth centuries these indigenous traditions increasingly reasserted themselves as the Italian monopoly on politics and culture began to decline. Nor was this process unique to the West. In fact it was much more marked in the East, where Latin culture was an equally alien implant. But while in the East the renaissance of "sub-Roman" traditions meant the growth of ancient forms of high culture, the most notable being Greek, in the West it meant the reassertion of Celtic and Germanic tradition.

Barbarization was but part of the rapid changes in Roman society, culture, and government that took place during the third and fourth centuries. Partially spurred by such internal problems as plague, a falling birthrate, constitutional instability, and the failure of the Roman world to develop from a labor-intensive system based largely on slavery to a more efficient mercantile or protoindustrial system, and partially by the increased external pressures on its overextended frontiers, the Empire had to seek a new equilibrium. The result, which emerged at the end of the third and beginning of the fourth centuries, was a very different but vital world.

Just as the army had been the primary agent of Romanization throughout the Empire, from the third century it became the primary agent of barbarization. This internal transformation of the army was closely allied to the militarization of Roman

society and government generally, so that at the very time that the army was increasingly a barbarian element in the Empire, it was the all-pervasive agent and model of imperial organization.

MILITARIZATION

The Roman legions protecting the frontiers had been an effective means of Romanization for a number of reasons. First, they were relatively permanent—legions often remained in specific sites for generations and even centuries. Second, since actual military activities were extremely rare even along the frontier, soldiers, largely recruited in the first centuries of empire from among the Italian peasantry, had abundant time and capital to become involved in local agriculture and manufacture. Finally, because of the usual process of granting veterans land in the area and the high rate of intermarriage of veterans and legionaries with the women of the local population, the active and retired military came to dominate local life.

Thus the presence of Roman soldiers resulted in a fundamental transformation of a region's economy and society. The needs of supplying the army and providing land to veterans was the primary agent in the organization of the countryside. Each legion owned a vast amount of land, which could be worked by soldier-farmers, granted to veterans, or sold or leased to civilians. Near the camps sprang up the inevitable civilian settlements that appear around any military post. They were called *canabae,* technically "cabarets" or wineshops, a clear indication of their main role. These rough settlements provided soldiers with drink, women, and increasingly, with workshops, hostels, and other services and diversions.

As long as the legions received regular recruits from the Romanized provincial peasantry, the reaffirmation of the Romanness of this military presence, albeit of a modest sort, was assured. However, since the time of Hadrian (reigned A.D. 117–138) recruits were assigned to legions in their native provinces. While this may have had the desired effects of increasing the number of recruits and improving their efficiency, since native recruits were defending their own homes, it also encouraged the growth

of localism and particularism in religion, art, language, and increasingly, in political identity. By the fourth century, service in the military had become, like other occupations, a hereditary obligation. Thus legions and auxiliary units were largely self-perpetuating entities. The wives of veterans and soldiers (who, although theoretically prevented from marrying while on active duty prior to 197 had been establishing families for decades) were drawn largely from the local populations. Thus generations of soldier-farmers and local notables among the *limes* became increasingly tied to local, non-classical customs and traditions. Prior to the third century, however, the impact of this transformation had not been felt widely outside the frontier regions because such people had a relatively minor role in the internal life of the Empire.

Political power within the Empire had long been a juggling act in which participated the senate, the army, and of course the emperor, but all three institutions up to the death of Commodus in 192 had been largely Italian. Over half of the senators were from Italy, and the remainder were, with few exceptions, drawn from the most strongly Latinized provinces—Spain, Africa, and Gallia Narbonensis. Moreover, since they had to invest a considerable amount of their wealth in Italian land, were required to attend meetings regularly in Rome, needed permission to travel outside of Italy, and tended to intermarry extensively, senatorial families of provincial origin rapidly became Italian, just as at a lower level of society, military families were becoming provincial. This senate owed its importance to constitutional, economic, and social factors. First, the constitutional tradition obliged an emperor to select senators to command all of his legions except the one in Egypt, to govern major frontier provinces, and to command the armies. Second, while the senate possessed a strong hereditary nucleus, it was in every generation open to a certain number of candidates who, along with the old established senatorial families, controlled enormous wealth, principally in land. This was especially true in the West, where even in times of crisis the poverty of the imperial treasury often contrasted with the private wealth of individual senators. Finally, through their networks based on political dependents and land-

holding throughout the Roman world, the influence of senators reached into every corner of the Empire. When provoked, the senate could be a formidable opponent to even the most ambitious emperor.

Prior to the third century, the military power on which rested imperial control was still primarily found in the Praetorian Guard, that elite body of approximately 10,000 soldiers who served (and sometimes selected or eliminated) the emperor and his household. They were required to be Roman citizens, and, like the senators, were, until the end of the second century, largely drawn from Italy. Thus they too maintained the centrist Latin character of the Empire.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the emperors had all come from Italian families of senatorial rank. Whatever the differences between emperor, senate, and army—bitter, bloody, and brutal as they often were—these conflicts had been among parties that shared major cultural, social, and political values.

With the reign of Septimus Severus (193–211), the commander of the Danube army who was proclaimed emperor by his troops, began an important new phase of Roman history. The defenders of the provinces, and particularly those of the West, now came into their own as control of the Empire passed into the hands of those who had saved it—the frontier armies and their commanders. From the perspective of the old Italian senatorial aristocracy and the inhabitants of more settled and civilized areas, this was a period of disaster and crisis. A succession of provincial military commanders, often openly scornful of the senate, were raised to the purple by their armies, fought each other for hegemony, and were usually assassinated for their efforts when they proved incapable either of bringing victory against internal and external foes or of sufficiently enriching their supporters. The senate's attempts to control the selection of the emperor was constantly thwarted by the tendency of the provincial armies to view succession as hereditary, particularly when the new emperor had come from the military. However, from the perspective of those in the frontier and particularly from Pannonia, it was a golden age. The Western legions had demonstrated their strength and their vitality, and as the Sever-

ans sought to consolidate their position they looked to the per-
sonnel and the models of their border armies for support.

Initially Severus himself was willing to work with the senate
of which he had been a member, but senatorial opposition led
him to rely on the provincial army, which he and his successors
rewarded with considerable pay increases, donatives or special
bonuses, and the right to marry. The added expenses of this
military largesse were financed through the liquidation of the
vast wealth he confiscated from the senatorial opposition. His
son, known to posterity by his military nickname Caracalla,
expanded his father's promilitary policy, raising soldiers' pay
by 50 percent. To finance this he resorted to two measures.
First, as his father had done earlier, he debased the denarius,
the silver coin used to pay the troops; within a few decades, this
led to the total collapse of imperial coinage. Second, he doubled
the traditional 5 percent inheritance tax paid by all Roman
citizens, and, to expand the base of this tax, made all free in-
habitants of the Empire Roman citizens. This latter measure
acknowledged a largely de facto situation, since the distinction
between citizen and foreigner no longer had much real sig-
nificance. However it did strengthen the relative position of
provincials in the Empire who, henceforth, from Britain to
Arabia, looked upon themselves as Romans with the same rights
and possibilities as Italians. These measures, like the increase of
military pay, tended to strengthen the position of those peoples
on the periphery of the Empire at the expense of those at the
center, and those in a position to benefit most from these changes
were soldiers and veterans.

This led to increasing militarization of the Empire and par-
ticularly the provinces, where civil administration had long been
a pastiche of overlapping positions and jurisdictions. For the first
time, not only officers but even common soldiers had consider-
able disposable income to enrich the *canabae* and local civilian
communities along the *limes*. Areas such as Pannonia, which
had hardly begun to recover from the Marcomannian wars,
suddenly experienced a tremendous burst of new construction.
At Aquincum, for example, the old *canaba* was given the
status of *colonia,* or colonial town, and, befitting its new dignity,

its old wood and mud shanties were replaced with stone houses neatly arranged along a gridwork of paved streets. These new houses boasted hypocaustic (hot air) heating systems, running water provided by an extensive city waterworks, and elegant frescoes. The city was provided with a wall and a new forum, used more for display than for business since the old one was entirely adequate. In Carnuntum, likewise elevated to a *colonia*, a similar transformation took place, including the construction of a magnificent public bath with a public columned hall of 143 x 103 m and a wall approximately eight feet high.

This construction, both public and private, was matched by a growth in the production of luxury goods and even locally made crafts, indicating that for the first time the region was sufficiently prosperous to support local artisans, even if the quality of their work seldom matched the Gallic, Rhaetian, Syrian, and Italian products they copied. All these signs of prosperity were directly related to the increased status and wealth of the military.

By improving the economic status of the frontier provinces, the military came to play a central role in even the civilian aspects of daily life. Locally, the provincial curia were increasingly dominated by officers and veterans who were able to qualify for local senates on the basis of their retirement bonuses. The physical separation of military camps and civilian settlements disappeared as the two merged, both as a result of a laxity of discipline and the necessity of protecting these settlements. Increasingly, as the free-spending days of the Severans degenerated into the anarchy of the barracks, peasants, driven by ever increasing taxation, resorted to armed robbery and even organized resistance. The only way to deal with these "brigands" was to use soldiers who kept the peace within the provinces by putting down these outlaw bands that, by the third century, had seemed to spring up everywhere. The use of soldiers as police became increasingly the norm as military commanders took on important roles in tax collection and in the administration of justice in an increasingly hostile society.

These crises, which led to an even more expanded role for the military, had ironically been caused by it. Because the Sev-

erans could never trust the senate to support them, they were forced to find ways to circumvent the role of the senate in commanding the military and to constantly augment the army salary to maintain its good will. This was financed by still more confiscations of senatorial property for real or imagined plots and by drastic devaluation of the silver coinage. This naturally further alienated the senate and brought about enormous problems in the financial stability of the Empire. Exacerbating all this was the fact that the provincial armies, having gotten a taste of their power as emperor-makers, set about it with tremendous vigor, assassinating emperors and raising others at a great rate. Between the death of Severus Alexander (235) and the ascension of Diocletian (284), there were at least twenty more or less legitimate emperors and innumerable pretenders, usurpers, and coregents. The longest reign during this period was that of a pretender, Postumus, who established himself as ruler of Gaul, Britain, Spain, and at times parts of northern Italy for nine years.

The restoration of order by Diocletian solidified the increasing role of the military. Although credited with having separated civil and military administrations, under him and his successors the civil service was reorganized along military lines, hardly a surprising development given that during the third and fourth centuries the route to high office normally meant military service. Thus many ambitious civil servants either rose primarily through the military or spent some time in it. By the beginning of the fourth century, military organization and structure, along with the soldier's cultural and political values, had become the primary model along which Roman society was ordered. But these soldiers were no longer the Italian peasants of an earlier age—increasingly they were the very barbarians they were enlisted to oppose.

BARBARIZATION

Already Marcus Aurelius had found it necessary to use slaves and barbarians to fight other barbarians and had incorporated Germanic warrior groups along the *limes* into the Roman army.

Of course, while the extent to which he did this was extraordinary, the use of barbarians in the military was not novel. While only citizens could serve in the legions and praetorian cohorts, foreigners had long been used in auxiliary units. However, in the third and fourth centuries A.D., as the increasing pressure on the frontiers from east and north and the frequent internal strife placed greater demands on military manpower than the internal resources of the Empire, reduced by plague and a falling birthrate, could meet, the ranks were increasingly filled with barbarians.

The first barbarian elements in the Roman army were recruited from neighboring tribes. Roman foreign policy sought constantly to bring the leadership of tribes along the frontiers under Roman influence by bribing them with Roman citizenship, gifts, and military and economic support in order to use them to keep their own peoples pacific and as buffers against more hostile tribes. Treaties were established with these leaders, usually providing them primarily with gold for the chiefs and grain for the masses. In return, Rome was guaranteed troops from these tribes. In the latter half of the third century this practice grew enormously, and Roman units recruited from throughout the frontiers of the Empire carried the names of barbarian peoples. In the East alone we find units of Franks, Saxons, Vandals, Goths, Sarmatians, Quadi, Chamavi, Iberians, Assyrians, and others. Normally, these barbarians were recruited, served for a period of time, and then returned to their own peoples, becoming the migrant labor force of the ancient world. For these people, the military experience was an opportunity to gain riches and learn firsthand of the Roman world. But this use of foreign troops often caused tension and strife; not infrequently pressure for recruits resulted in resistance and revolt against the Romans and their puppet leaders in the barbarian world. Partly to avoid such resistance, which was perceived to arise from the contamination of likely sources of recruits by contact with hostile tribes living in "Free Germany," some time in the third century Romans began settling groups of barbarians within the Empire.

The first barbarians to be settled in the Empire, called *laeti,*

were small groups of either refugees or prisoners of war, assigned either to Roman prefects or individual landowners. They were settled with their families in depopulated regions of Gaul and Italy. These people served a twofold purpose: first, they cultivated areas that had been abandoned due to the plague, general population decline, and the flight of the free population from tax collection. Second, since they and their children were obligated to serve in the military, their communities served to produce and raise recruits for the army under the watchful eye of Rome.

A world of difference existed between these *laeti* and the free barbarian units, or *foederati,* who, from the end of the fourth century began to dominate the military, and in particular the elite mobile units, called *comitatenses,* which, beginning with Constantine around 300, were stationed not on the frontiers but within or near the major provincial cities. These units could be rapidly deployed to meet invaders at any point along the frontier or to impede their advance in case they had already broken through and thus were an important strategic innovation. However, their close proximity to Roman communities charged with feeding and equipping them accelerated the assimilation of barbarian soldier and Roman civilian.

These units of *foederati* were under the command of their own chiefs who, while often members of families that had served Rome for generations, nevertheless owed their power to their barbarian followers. Archaeological evidence from the different sorts of barbarian settlements in the Empire suggests that, while *laeti* settlements were intentionally isolated from indigenous Roman population areas and still more from Free Germans, *foederati* in the Empire not only found themselves in intimate contact with the local population, whom they tended to dominate through their military roles, but also remained in close and constant contact with the tribes across the Rhine or the Danube.

The leaders of these groups, called "imperial Germans" by scholars, rose in the fourth and fifth centuries to the highest ranks of the Roman military. This is hardly surprising when one considers the overall importance of Germanic troops and the well-established tradition of advancement through military

service. As early as the reign of Constantine we hear of a certain Bonitus, a Frank who became a Roman general, and as the fourth century progressed Frankish commanders provided much of the leadership of the army in the West, becoming virtual rulers who could make and break emperors at will: Arbogast, Bauto, and Richomer were military commanders (*magistri militum*) under Gratian and Valentinian II; the latter two even served as consuls. The official oration praising Bauto, a pagan Frank from across the Rhine, on the occasion of his consulship in 385 was written by no less than the future St. Augustine, then a young rhetorician in the imperial capital of Milan.

Such Germanic-Roman commanders were anything but illiterate and uncultured barbarians. They moved in the highest and most civilized circles of the Empire, some even comfortable with such people as Bishop Ambrose of Milan and corresponding with rhetoricians such as Libanius. They were pagans, it is true, but their paganism was that of the senatorial aristocracy, as exemplified by Richomer's acquaintance with the man of letters Symmachus, rather than the religion of Free Germany. After forcing Valentinian II to commit suicide in 392, Arbogast had a rhetorician, one Eugenius, proclaimed emperor, in part because the two men shared the common values of Roman pagan culture. Arbogast and his pagan Roman puppet were defeated two years later by the Orthodox emperor Theodosius, but the Orthodox victory was due largely to the efforts of yet another group of barbarians, the Arian Visigoths, and their leader, Alaric, who, unhappy with the reward he received from Theodosius for his assistance, sacked Rome some sixteen years later. By the late fourth century, categories such as barbarian and Roman, pagan and Christian, were much more complex than is often imagined.

The last, most decisive, and most misunderstood phase of barbarian presence in the Empire was the entry of entire peoples, *gentes,* into the Empire, a process that had begun with the people whom Alaric led. The precipitating factor was the arrival in 376 of the Huns, who destroyed the relatively stable confederation of barbarian peoples living under Gothic domination around the Black Sea. These Goths, about whom we will learn

more in the next chapter, had been living in close symbiotic relationship with the Empire for over a century, alternately serving in or fighting against the imperial army. The kingdom of the Greuthungi (or, later, Ostrogoths) was destroyed and their king, Ermanaric, sacrificed himself to his god in a ritual suicide. His heterogeneous people were then largely absorbed into the Hunnic confederation. The Tervingians (later called Visigoths), faced with the collapse of their kingdom and imminent starvation, abandoned their king Athanaric and under the leadership of the pro-Roman generals Fritigern and Alavivus, petitioned Emperor Valens to receive them into the Empire in return for military service. Valens, thinking to solve his military manpower problems, agreed, promising to settle them in depopulated parts of Thrace.

The effects of the incorporation of an entire people into the Empire were disastrous in both the short and the long term. Initially the Goths were divided, some being sent immediately to reinforce the eastern frontier and others being camped at Adrianopolis for the winter, while the majority were settled in Thrace, where the local Roman authorities proceeded to make a fortune by exploiting their desperate condition, forcing them to sell their own people in return for dog flesh (the going rate was one dog for one Goth). The conflicts which naturally erupted were exacerbated by the arrival of Ostrogoths, disgruntled Goths from Adrianopolis, and others who had been sold into slavery. The conflict developed into general rebellion and, when Valens attempted to crush them on 9 August 378, to everyone's surprise (including, apparently, the Goths), his army was destroyed and he and many of his high command were killed.

The Goths, joined by various other bands of barbarians, moved on toward Constantinople, but their real goal was food rather than booty, and in any case they were in no position to take a strongly fortified city. The various groups fell to fighting among themselves, and in 382 Theodosius made a formal treaty with the Visigoths, settling them along the Danube in Thrace, where they were allowed to be governed by their own chiefs and to fight under their command as *foederati*. This settlement did not last long and shortly after the defeat of Arbogast, the Visi-

goths, under their king Alaric, were on the move again, sacking Rome in 410 before finally being settled in southwest Gaul in 418.

This settlement of an entire people—some estimates put their number at over 200,000—provided a model for the future absorption of barbarian peoples who had either fled across the Danube and Rhine or had invaded and been checked, if not defeated. These would include the Ostrogoths, Vandals, Burgundians, Sueves (Suebi), and, later, the Lombards (Langobardi). Traditionally, resettlement has been thought to have meant directly assigning either empty land or confiscated property to the barbarians. The process by which Visigoths, Burgundians, and Ostrogoths were settled has usually been seen as an extension of *hospitalitas,* or the system by which soldiers were billeted on the civilian population and given one-third of the estates on which they were placed. Such a procedure suggests large-scale disruption of the economic and social fabric of those regions in which barbarians were settled. More recently, it has been suggested that rather than assigning real property to the barbarians, they were granted shares of the tax income from the land, thus leaving proprietors in undisturbed possession of their land.[3] The reality was probably somewhere between the two extremes and varied widely from region to region. Contemporary authors speak unambiguously about the allotment of land to the Goths and others, and systematic attempts to read all of these references as hyperbole or rhetorical license are forced. On the other hand, to judge from archaeological evidence, it appears that barbarian warriors settled in inhabited lands such as Gaul and Italy and did not usually physically occupy the lands to which they were assigned. They tended to remain in cities or at strategic points along the borders of their regions, collecting the rents or taxes from their allotted properties just as did many Roman aristocrats. Roman officers, eager to preserve at least the illusion of the imperial system, may at times have seen such arrangements in terms of taxes; the tax third traditionally collected for the central administration may have been turned over to the federated barbarians. That the barbarians receiving or the Romans paying made such a distinction between taxes and

rents is not at all clear. However, it is clear that in the fourth and fifth centuries the taxation system in the Empire underwent enormous changes, which directly affected its ability to provide for public defense and maintain the social structure.

TAXATION

The maintenance of the army required enormous expenditures, which could only be met through a transformation of the means by which the state collected its income. The Roman Empire, for all of its wealth, never developed a system of borrowing against future revenues through anything resembling bonds—this would be a medieval invention. Instead, emperors sought to meet their enormously increased financial demands through a radical overhaul of the tax system—a transformation that had far-reaching implications not only on the economic but on social and political structures as well.

Traditionally, the annual income the imperial government collected from the provinces were the various sorts of *tributum,* apparently forms of direct assessments or "contributions" that the central administration authorized local *curia* to impose in order to meet their communal obligations. Just how these assessments were collected seems to have been left largely to the individual community, only the total amounts being fixed by province. Because of the prestige to be gained through the demonstration of local civic virtue, in good times these assessments were often paid almost entirely by the wealthy as part of their role as leading citizens, *curiales* or decurions, who were members of the local *curia.* Likewise, many of the public services of the Empire were based on the voluntary contributions of the rich in public offices and the labor of the poor working on roads and the like. This system was advantageous to local magnates since it placed the center of public attention on the local community in which they played the leading role. It also benefited the imperial government since it saved money and manpower by utilizing the services and wealth of local magistrates. However it was flawed by the possibility that these individuals, by their prominence, could exert influence on the imperial government to lower temporarily the assessments demanded. When

this occurred, as during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, since the emperor could not borrow against future revenue, he was forced to debase the currency to meet shortfalls. However, these fixed assessments, in a period of expanding need and runaway inflation, did not begin to meet the requirements of the imperial army. Although by the fourth century, the real salary of the military and civil servants had been reduced by debasement to one-half of what they had received at the end of the second century, the increased numbers of military and civil service personnel, inequalities in collection, loss of population, and destruction caused by plundering and war left imperial finances in a serious crisis.

During the crisis of the third century, the collapse of the currency and the tremendous demands on the treasury to cover the needs of the military forced changes in this tax system. The first, instituted under Diocletian, was the introduction of a tax, the *annona*, essentially agricultural produce which, like the assessment tax, was collected through the local government. In order to assure proper apportionment of this tax, a new system was devised in the fourth century, one based on personal rather than communal assessment. All citizens had a tax liability indicating their ability to contribute to the *annona*. This liability was calculated in a measure called the *iugum*, which was based on the amount of arable land, and the *capitatio*, which some scholars believe was a head tax while others interpret it more generally as the "tax liability" of an individual or of a piece of property. Although initially this assessment was based on the personal wealth of individual citizens, by the end of the fourth century the entire system was based on shares of land values.[4] Ultimately, the focus of Roman taxation efforts was on extracting these payments from the wealthy in the form of gold. Free tenant farmers, called *coloni* since they owned no land themselves, were obligated to cultivate specific land in order to meet their tax obligations. Gradually, their landlord was placed in the position of their tax collector and thus was granted considerable power over their persons to ensure that they generated the necessary income from the land.

Initially, this assessment was periodically updated and collection, as before, was made by the local curial magistrates. How-

ever, as population and agricultural productivity declined, as
individuals secured exemptions from their personal shares of
the assessment, and as the Empire's need for military financing
grew ever greater, serious and extremely burdensome inequali-
ties appeared in the system. At the same time, the assessment
came to be seen as abstract units of potential tax proceeds that
could be transferred from one tax roll to another.

The effects of this taxation system in the fourth and fifth cen-
turies led to a transformation in the role of local elites in im-
perial government. Individual *curiales,* responsible for paying
the annual assessment even when it could not be collected lo-
cally, were faced with economic ruin. Thus the prestige and im-
portance of traditional voluntary public service declined. While
some wealthy individuals, through a variety of legal and illegal
tax shelters, could lessen their personal burden, the burden on
those responsible for the community grew without cease. The
natural effect was the destruction of the importance of the local
curia as the center of public life and of the tradition of civic ser-
vice as a mark of prestige. The burdens of *curiales* were such
that it was necessary to force individuals to take these offices and
to forbid them from escaping their duties by fleeing the cities.
Those individuals willing or even eager to participate in tax
collecting (and there were always some) clearly hoped to use their
power to extort money from the population for their personal
profit. As this vital local community declined in importance,
the provincial administration became more directly involved
in the collection of the *annona,* and the long arm of imperial
revenue agents reached for the first time to individual citizens
too weak to obtain the sorts of special privileges that protected
the powerful. The decline of voluntary civic service, the direct
result of the tax burden, led to a growth in imperial bureau-
cracy, which in turn increased the demand for still more tax
revenue.

The Winners: An Aristocracy of Landowners

The primary beneficiaries of this transformation were the great
senatorial landowners of the West, who, by virtue of their im-

perial connections and private military means, were virtually immune to the increasing burden of taxation. Thus the West was faced with the paradox of immensely wealthy individuals and an extremely poor treasury. It has been estimated that by the middle of the fifth century, the total annual revenues of the eastern half of the Empire were around 270,000 gold pounds, of which 45,000 pounds were for the military. At the same time, in the West the entire annual budget was approximately 20,000 gold pounds—an almost insignificant figure when one considers that a single wealthy Italian senator could easily have an annual income of 6,000 pounds. For such individuals, their devotion to *Romanitas* meant primarily fidelity to an elite cultural tradition and the preservation of the immunities and privileges of their class. Such concerns had long taken precedence over the preservation of imperial control, which was, if anything, a threat to their autonomy. To the extent that barbarians might be the means employed by Constantinople to return the wealthy few to accountability, they were to be resisted; to the extent that the barbarians and their kings might preserve the privileges of the senatorial aristocracy, they were to be welcomed. It is no wonder that by the mid-fifth century an aristocratic Gallo-Roman landowner at the court of the Burgundian king could taunt a Christian holy man who had long predicted the ruin of the Roman Empire by asking him why his predictions had not come true. The Empire as a political reality was indeed gone in Burgundy, but since his own position had not been adversely affected, he had not noticed its demise![5]

The Roman who did not know that he was no longer living in the Roman Empire was representative of a relatively new aristocracy whose origins went back at the most no further than the time of Constantine. The fourth century had been particularly prosperous for those in the West who enjoyed imperial favor. Initially, this meant the Roman and barbarian aristocrats in the court at Trier. Trier, which served as the imperial residence and place of the prefect of the Gauls until the 390s, could be described allegorically in mid-century as the equal of Rome and Constantinople. This city, celebrated by Ausonius and other Latin poets, served as a vital center for the interaction and

assimilation of Roman and Germanic elites. Here many Frank-
ish and Alemannic chieftains first entered Roman service, and
from here "imperial Germans" could be returned to rule their
peoples in order to assure their cooperation with Rome.

For all of its wealth and importance, Trier's significance was
based almost entirely on its role as an administrative center. The
city began to decline after Emperor Honorius moved his resi-
dence to Milan and then finally to Ravenna in the last years of
the fourth century. The military commander Stilicho decided
around 395 to move the prefecture to Arles. The families whose
favor at court had brought them to power followed the emperor
and the prefect south and east. The decline was further acceler-
ated by the sacking (but not, apparently, the destruction) of the
city by barbarians no less than four times between 410 and 435.

The families whose power in the West was based not only on
imperial favor but also on their local resources were to be found
further away from the *limes*. Particularly in the regions of the
Rhône valley, Aquitaine, and along the Mediterranean coast,
the great families such as the Syagrii, Pontii, Aviti, Apollinares,
Magni, and others expanded their networks of intermarriage, pa-
tronage, and landholding. Here Roman civilization had put down
its deepest and strongest roots, and members of these great fami-
lies continued the traditions of Roman culture well beyond the
demise of imperial power in the West.

The processes of local power transformation discussed above
had long contributed to a growing sense of regionalism within
the Empire. Already during the third century, the aristocracy in
Gaul had shown its willingness to see political control pass to re-
gional pretenders, with the result that the armies had been able
to raise up a series of Gallic emperors. In fact, it was the threat
of usurpers arising in these regions rather than that of barbar-
ians from across the Rhine that had led Stilicho to move the pre-
fecture to the lower Rhône.

The culture that most clearly defined this aristocracy was in-
creasingly different from that of the Eastern Empire. In the East,
the resurgence of Greek culture through the patina of Latin re-
sulted in the growing importance of philosophy and, among the
Christianizing elite, led to doctrinal factionalism and dispute. In

the European West, the fourth and fifth centuries saw the progressive abandonment of serious Greek studies, and with them, the deemphasis of philosophy in favor of rhetoric. Education, which remained exclusively the domain of the secular schools of grammar and rhetoric, was designed to prepare young members of the elite with the common cultural background and oratorical skills necessary to direct the work of the imperial bureaucracy. This education, conducted by rhetors hired and paid by the state, was exclusively literary, that is, pagan. The Church took no role in the formal education of its members—no schools of theology existed in the West as they did, for example, in Alexandria and Antioch. Thus young aristocrats, Christian or pagan, continued to be bound together by a common cultural heritage which was the essential prerequisite to advancement in imperial service and, in a society increasingly stratified into hereditary occupations, one of the few means of social mobility outside of the military, which was, as we have seen, increasingly barbarian.

This training in the literary and rhetorical tradition of Rome was the great unifier of Roman aristocratic society. The values of Christian and pagan Romans of the fourth and early fifth centuries were virtually indistinguishable. The real gulf was between the educated elite and everyone else. It was on a basis of education, not religion or political organization, that the Roman elite separated itself form the barbarians increasingly present in their midst.

Some of the most notable aristocrats withdrew entirely into a world of almost unbelievable luxury and pleasure, with little or no role in the public domain, while others devoted their lives to literature. Symmachus, best known as a man of letters and defender of the old pagan traditions of Rome, for example, spent no more than three years of his life in public affairs. The tradition of public service had not entirely died out, however, and with the erosion in the West of central political power as well as local curial power, some members of the senatorial aristocracy moved to fill the comparable positions in the two spheres which replaced them: the barbarian courts within the Empire and the Church. The Roman at the Burgundian royal court described above was typical of those Romans who provided the necessary

administrative skills for barbarian kings facing the complex tasks of settling their peoples into the world of Rome. Such advisors were an established presence in barbarian courts even before they had entered the Empire. Some of these individuals, such as Cassiodorus and Boethius, in the court of the Ostrogothic king of Italy or the Roman patricians of Burgundy, are known by name. Many other Romans, who must have run the fiscal and administrative offices of barbarian kings, were anonymous, leaving their traces in the elaboration of barbarian law codes dependent for their form and often even their content on late Roman law, and in the types of royal administraive documents and procedures derived from late Roman provincial administrative systems.

At the local level, the aristocracy also filled the power vacuum left by the disintegration of civic government through the church office of bishop. During the fourth and fifth centuries, this was much more prevalent in Gaul, where the bishops came from the highest aristocracy, than in Italy and Spain, where bishops came from important but not truly outstanding families, perhaps indicating the relative vigor of other local forms of authority in these regions compared with those north of the Pyrenees and the Alps.

By the end of the third century, the basic organization of the Church had been long established and with it the undisputed priority of the *episcopus,* or bishop. Although appointed with the consultation of the local community and consecrated by another neighboring bishop, once in place a bishop held office for life and could be deposed only by a council of neighboring bishops. He thus effectively enjoyed autocratic powers, ordaining his priests, deacons, and deaconesses, admitting new members to the community, excommunicating those whose beliefs or morals he disapproved of, and completely controlling diocesan finances. Normally his jurisdiction corresponded to the territorial jurisdiction of the secular administration. It was essentially urban, and normally each city possessed its own bishop. The bishop's authority extended in theory into the countryside, but since Christianization of rural Europe was an extremely gradual process, not complete in a formal sense before the tenth century, his focus was the city.

Of course, the actual power of the bishop prior to Constantine varied greatly, particularly in the West where the bishop commanded little respect outside of the Christian community. Imperial favor from Constantine and his successors changed this situation radically. For the first time, the position of bishop became sufficiently powerful to be part of the aristocracy's means of preserving and extending its power. Bishops were granted imperial subsidies and exemptions and were even given powers of Roman magistrates that had traditionally been reserved for provincial governors. The wealth of bishops had also been greatly increased by donations from the pious, largely from aristocratic women who, in the fourth and fifth centuries, played an enormously important but until recently little appreciated role in the growth of western Christianity. This new religion provided a rare means by which women could move out of their normally subordinate and private world and participate in the public sphere. As benefactors, pilgrims, and, increasingly, by remaining virgins dedicated to God, women could obtain a status otherwise unknown to them in the thoroughly male-dominated world of antiquity.

Still, in the fourth century the election of aristocrats to church office was exceptional. It caused a scandal when a wealthy Gallic senator, Paulinus, abandoned his career and estates to enter religious life and eventually became a bishop. It was also highly unusual for Ambrose, the son of a praetorian prefect, to allow himself to be elected bishop of even so important a see as Milan.

But in the fifth century, particularly in Gaul, aristocrats in church office became rather the rule. Bishops tended to come from the senatorial class and were selected, not from among the clergy, but usually from the ranks of those with proven records of leadership and administration. Election to episcopal office became the culmination of a career pattern or *cursus honorum* which had nothing to do with the Church. Not surprisingly, the values of these bishops reflected the values of their class and of the secular society in which they had spent their long careers. Those virtues for which these bishops are most remembered in their epitaphs and funerary orations were the worldly fame and glory that had been the traditional values of pagan Roman soci-

ety rather than religious virtues. Completely lacking in religious
or clerical backgrounds, most bishops in the West were little in-
volved in issues of theology or spirituality.

However, the selection of such figures probably accurately re-
flected the needs of their communities. As local curial offices lost
their ability to deal effectively with ever more demanding impe-
rial fiscal agents, with barbarian commanders assigned to prov-
inces by distant Constantinople, and with local magnates often
richer and more powerful in their own right than civil authori-
ties, local communities needed new power brokers who could of-
fer them protection. In the East, different religious and political
values led to the rise in the social and political importance of
ascetic holy men who, living outside the secular human commu-
nity, could by their very neutrality serve as patrons and arbitra-
tors. Their position as men of God gave them prestige and power
in worldly affairs. In the West, one looked rather to those who
had achieved prestige and power in this world and made them
leaders of the Church. Although holy men did appear from time
to time in the West, the Gallo-Roman episcopacy was largely
successful in ensuring that the prestige and authority of these as-
cetics was strictly subordinated to the bishop. The safest way to
do this was to develop the cult of dead holy men rather than re-
vere living ones. From at least the fifth century, the cult of mar-
tyrs and holy men in the West, firmly under episcopal control,
became the focus of popular religious enthusiasm, and episcopal
propagandists sought, in the literary productions on the lives and
miracles of the saints, to emphasize their submission to the hier-
archy. Thus, without rejecting the importance of the "friends of
God," Gallo-Roman bishops were able to annex their power in
order to strengthen their own social and religious hegemony.

To such Western bishops, the most important virtue did not
come from Christian spiritual or ascetic tradition but was *pietas,*
the central virtue identified from antiquity with the patriarchial
role of the emperor, the *pater patriae,* and since Constantine
with high office in general. This essentially conservative tendency
further strengthened the power of the senatorial aristocracy, which
alone could provide such figures and from which therefore came
virtually all Gallic bishops. Sees of Gallic cities tended to be

filled for generations by individuals from certain powerful senatorial families, who used these offices to further promote family interests. Even before the last vestiges of secular Roman authority had disappeared in the West, it is proper to speak of "episcopal lordships" as one of the most enduring characteristics of the Western political landscape.[6]

Gradually, however, under the influence of such exceptional figures as Hilarius of Arles and of Eastern monastic traditions introduced into Gaul at the island monastery of Lérins off the Provençal coast, ascetic values common to Eastern Christianity began to penetrate the episcopal tradition, at least in theory if not always in practice. So closely did the office of bishop come to be identified with the Gallo-Roman aristocracy that in the fifth century, as these new values altered the Western concept of episcopal office, so too did they permeate the idea the aristocracy held of itself. Thus the aristocracy increasingly focused on the episcopacy as its central institution, and in so doing began slowly to redefine itself and its *Romanitas* in terms of Christian values.

The Losers: Everyone Else

It is no wonder, in such a context, that the position of the Gallo-Roman aristocrat at the Burgundian court had changed so little that he had not noticed the disappearance of the Roman Empire. It is also no wonder that the cause that had brought the holy man he was confronting into court was the plight of the poor. They had been the victims of imperial taxation and continued to be the victims of the senatorial aristocracy. They too may not have noticed the demise of Rome, if only because whether called tax collectors or estate managers, the agents collecting their rents varied little from regime to regime or indeed century to century. As we shall see, the sorts of taxes introduced in the fourth century continued to be collected in only slightly altered forms in the eighth.

The economy of the Empire was of course overwhelmingly based on agriculture, especially in the West. Traditionally, most of the agricultural work outside of Italy and Spain was not done by slaves but rather by free tenant farmers called *coloni*. This

may have been due in part to the cost of slaves and their relative inefficiency as agricultural workers; it was certainly also because free *coloni,* unlike slaves, were liable for military service and thus it was in the Empire's interest to maintain a large pool of potential recruits.

Even when used in agricultural work, slaves were normally settled on plots of land which they worked and for which they paid rent. Often they could not be sold apart from the land. They could acquire property of their own which they could transmit to their children and often married into the lower levels of free society.

In the course of the third century, the status of free tenant farmers, or *coloni,* grew increasingly indistinguishable from that of *servi,* or serf-slaves. Under Diocletian, peasants who owned no land were registered under their landlord's name on the farms that they cultivated and were thus tied to the place where they paid their *capitatio* and *annona* taxes. Such an arrangement benefited landlords, who were thereby assured labor supplies, and the Empire, which could use landlords to enforce tax collection. By the end of the fourth century, in many regions of the Empire *coloni* were distinguishable from slaves only in that they continued to have a juridical personality, and even this was severely limited: they were bound to the land on which they were born, had no right to leave it, and had to look to the landowner as master and patron.

Free farmers who owned land did not cease to exist in the late Empire, but they became increasingly rare. Without the protection of powerful patrons or imperial favor, they were the most frequent victims of the tax collector, and literary evidence suggests that their lot was often indistinguishable from that of *coloni.*

Individuals unable to escape these taxes had few alternatives for survival. In Gaul, from the late third century one hears of periodic revolts of the Bagaudae, heterogeneous groups of provincials pushed into revolt by taxation. They posed a threat sufficiently grave to require prolonged military operations. They appear again in 417, 435–37, 442, 443, and 454. These uprisings were often massive, requiring full-scale military operations to

suppress them, and in some cases they were not simply inchoate peasant violence but real separatist movements in which the leaders expelled Roman officers and landowners and set up both an army and a judicial system. In every case, however, these uprisings were doomed, they were ruthlessly suppressed by the full force of the imperial army or, as in the case of the Bagaudae in Aquitaine in the 440s, the Visigoths were sent to destroy them.

More successful than the Bagaudae were the bishops who, because of their social and political background, were able to represent and protect local communities. The late fourth-century Germanus of Auxerre, who rose to the rank of general before becoming a bishop, typified the best of these aristocratic bishop-protectors. Twice, for example, when Gaul faced an unusually high tax assessment, while some took up arms as Bagaudae, he traveled to Arles to appeal for relief. Ultimately the rebels were crushed and their leader killed; by contrast, Germanus succeeded in obtaining relief. Small wonder that he was called upon to secure tax relief by groups from as far away as Armorica (modern Brittany) and even Britain, and he willingly undertook journeys to the praetorian prefect in Arles and even the imperial court at Ravenna. Such bishops as Germanus in time inherited the role of the Bagaudae, whose memory they Christianized, making them into something akin to Christian martyrs.[7]

Another way for oppressed freemen to obtain tax relief was to place themselves under the protection (*patrocinium*) of wealthy, powerful senators or other notables who, through their military power or wealth, could exert more leverage in dealing with local curials and even imperial tax agents. This option, however, left the individual at the mercy of his patron, seldom a desirable situation.

The last and perhaps most frequent option was simply flight. Throughout late antiquity the phenomenon of abandoned lands (*agri deserti*) became common as peasants, free or not, simply fled the pressures of landlords and tax collectors, usually to become the *coloni* of other landlords under more favorable circumstances. Landlords, burdened by the tax liabilities on unworked land, abandoned it in turn. At its height, this may have included as much as 20 percent of all the arable land of the Empire. Al-

though some of this abandonment may have resulted from the
exhaustion of the soil, most was caused by the impossibility of
meeting tax obligations and rents. The results of abandonment
were catastrophic, since empty lands meant that tax revenues had
to be made up elsewhere and increased the burden on areas still
worked. Moreover, the attempts to bring such areas back into
cultivation resulted in the large-scale settlement of barbarians
within the Empire.

Flight from overtaxed land and submission to landlords pow-
erful enough to protect peasants and craftsmen from public taxes
resulted in increasing the privatization of the West. By the end
of the fifth century, society was well on the way to becoming a
two-tiered world, composed on the one hand of wealthy, autono-
mous aristocrats, themselves virtually public institutions, and on
the other of their dependents, bound to the land and dependent
economically and politically on their patrons. Within this world,
neither the elite, who had managed to separate themselves cul-
turally, socially, and politically from the institutions of the Em-
pire, nor the masses, who had sought protection from the Empire
in subordination to this elite, had anything to mourn in substi-
tuting Romanized barbarian kingdoms for a barbarized Roman
Empire.

The Barbarian World
to the Sixth Century

Wax tablets, such as the one on which was recorded our Germanic herdsman Stelus's transaction with the Roman merchant Gargilius Secundus, were quite likely the only written documents with which he and his barbarian contemporaries ever came into contact. Aside from the occasional use of runes, enigmatic letters carved into bits of wood or stone, usually for ritual purposes, it would be centuries before descendants of such people would use writing, and even longer before they would record their thoughts and lives in their own languages. Thus, when historians attempt to understand the barbarian world of late antiquity they must invariably turn to the written sources of their civilized neighbors, the Greeks and Romans with whom they came into contact. To do so, however, is as dangerous as it is essential, because in describing the barbarian world, ancient ethnographers and historians had their own purposes and followed their own conventions that had little to do with what might today be called descriptive ethnography. Faced with a tribal world organized along radically different principles, the classical authors sought to impose an order on what appeared to them as chaos, and the order which they chose was the received Greek ethnographic tradition within which writers since at least Herodotus had described "barbarians."

Thus, while not usually introducing intentional distortions or blatant falsehoods into the details of their descriptions, classical observers of barbarians attempted to make these alien peoples comprehensible by means of an *interpretatio romana,* that is, by

placing them within their received cultural and social categories. Perhaps because of curiosity, fear, moralizing, or missionizing, authors placed their data into preconceived structures and described their subjects with an inherited vocabulary and images that responded to their needs.

This tendency to understand the barbarians not in their own terms but in those of "civilization" was particularly marked among Roman scholars who, beginning with Pliny (23–79 AD) and Tacitus (55–116/20), drew on their own experience and that of their Greek predecessors to describe the wider world beyond the Roman *limes*. Romans were not primarily creators; they were organizers. Their greatest contributions lay in providing structure, form, and regularity to the rich chaos they inherited from the peoples they conquered. In architecture, this meant the expansion and repetition of simple forms of vaulting and arcading to enclose and organize vast amounts of space; in government they accomplished their supreme achievement, the organization and regulation of a vast multiethnic empire. When Romans turned their attention to the barbarian world, here too they undertook a task of organization, first intellectual, through a description of barbarians that imposed Roman order and values on this otherwise incomprehensible world, and then political, as their active diplomatic and military efforts as well as the lure of their culture brought the barbarians progressively into the Roman orbit.

For the civilized Roman, the further one moved from the city and its cultural and political forms, the further one moved from the world of men toward that of beasts. Man was, after all, a political animal, that is, an animal particularly suited to life in the *polis,* or city. In such authors as Tacitus this tendency is particularly marked; even while moralizing about the extent to which certain Germanic tribes had been corrupted by Roman civilization, as he gets further from the Roman world the wilder and more bestial the peoples he describes become. At the extreme are the Fenni, who have no horses and no arms; they eat grass, dress in skins, and sleep on the ground. Labor is not divided on the basis of sex, and they are even devoid of religion. They are truly on the edge of what it meant for a Roman to be human. Beyond

them, Tacitus adds, "is the stuff of fables—Hellusii and Oxiones with faces and features of men, but the bodies and limbs of animals."[1]

Not surprisingly then, barbarians could, in Roman ethnography, be described with almost monotonous similarity: all barbarians resembled each other and animals more than Romans in both their virtues and in their vices. They were generally tall, blond, and foul-smelling; they lived not according to fixed, written laws but according to senseless and unpredictable customs. They were fierce and dangerous in war, but slothful, easily distracted, and quarrelsome in peace. Their faithlessness to those outside their tribe was proverbial; their love of drinking and fighting with each other the cause of their own destruction. Their language was more like animal cries than true human speech, their music and poetry rough and unmeasured. Their religion, when pagan, was a confused image of Roman religion perverted by superstition, when Christian, a crude, heretical version of the true faith.

These peoples poured out of the North, the "womb of peoples," in a seemingly inexhaustible supply, impelled by a constantly expanding population to search for new lands. In a sense, so similar were the barbarians that one could assume that all barbarians were one; there were never new peoples but rather a constant replacement of those destroyed or dispersed.

Nevertheless, Roman historians and ethnographers still struggled valiantly to classify, describe, and assign these chaotic hordes to specific places and groups—a Herculean task but exactly the sort most appealing to a Roman. Thus one finds among Roman writings extremely detailed descriptions of the various Germanic and Scythian peoples organized according to origin, language, custom, and religion. Once more, order was being brought to chaos in the best Roman tradition.

One need hardly wonder at the Roman approach to barbarians—the methods, classificatory categories, stereotypes, and purposes of this literature were intimately tied to classical culture. What is perhaps more amazing is that few Roman constructs have endured as long as their image of the barbarians in general and the Germanic peoples in particular. The heritage of classical

ethnography is twofold. First, and for our purposes most impor-
tant, it continues to dominate most historical descriptions of the
Germanic tribes of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages.
Maps, based on Tacitus' *Germania* and Caesar's description of
the Germanic tribes in his *Commentaries,* are often placed at the
beginning of medieval textbooks, and valiant efforts are made to
attach the barbarian peoples of the migration period to one or
another tribe of Tacitus's day. More significantly, scholars tend
to take Tacitus's first-century description of Germanic customs as
directly applicable to the societies of Goths, Franks, Burgundians,
and others who entered the Empire in the fourth and fifth cen-
turies, and they attempt to explain the development of social and
political institutions in the barbarian kingdoms in terms of these
earlier tribal practices, an effort analogous to taking a descrip-
tion of seventeenth-century New England and using it as a de-
scription of twentieth-century America. Likewise, they tend to
accept classical characterizations of barbarian mores, character,
and general "barbarism" as explanations for the process of con-
quest and settlement in the early Middle Ages.

Second, and more pernicious, these classical descriptions have
deeply influenced the way that modern Germany is viewed by
much of Europe and America. In the nineteenth century, fanta-
sies of primitive communistic societies and quasireligious devo-
tion to freedom among the early Germanic peoples influenced
much early social science speculation. In the 1930s National So-
cialist ideologues attempted to connect the establishment of the
Third Reich with the tribes of Tacitus's *Germania,* seeing the
history of the migration period as an integral part of the history
of the "German nation and people." While this attempt to ex-
ploit a mythic German past for modern propaganda purposes
has been overwhelmingly rejected in the aftermath of World
War II, those with whom the European wars of the past century
have left a residue of suspicion and hostility toward Germany
and Germans still often see in the ancient negative judgments on
Germanic fierceness, sloth, quarrelsomeness, drinking, and faith-
lessness, explanations for much of recent German history.

Both of these regrettable tendencies must be rejected. Classical
sources must be interpreted with great care in light of the pre-

occupations and traditions of classical ethnography and viewed keeping in mind the data collected by archaeologists. Scholars should be very careful to use the precious information provided by these authors while aware of the system within which Roman and Greek observers attempted to structure it. Moreover, for better or worse, the history of the barbarian world must be seen, not in context of "German history" in any modern sense but rather in terms of the history of late antiquity. As such, it belongs no more to the history of modern Germany than it does to that of France, Italy, or, for that matter, the United States.

Premigration Barbarian Society

If we attempt to reconstruct the world of our Germanic cattleman Stelus from the perspective of the material, physical evidence of archaeology rather than from Roman authors, we find ourselves on very unfamiliar and disorienting terrain. First, not only do we find no physical evidence of the myriad tribal divisions within the Germanic peoples, but we even have great difficulty talking about sharp divisions separating them from Celts and Slavs. The peoples referred to collectively as the "Germani" by classical authors included a complex mixture of peoples, some of whom no doubt spoke languages that belonged to the general Indo-European language group known as Germanic, but others were Slavs, Celts, and Finns constantly absorbed and reconstituted into new social groups. Since linguistic data does not exist from the earliest period of "Germanic" civilization, it is safer to talk from an archaeological perspective. According to this, Germanic society originated with Iron Age peoples who arose in the northern parts of central Europe and the southern regions of Scandinavia from the sixth century B.C. The earliest phases of this society, known as "Jastorfkultur," is contemporary with and often indistinguishable from the early Iron Age Hallstatt and Latène cultures further south and west. Its primary distinguishing characteristics, for our purposes, are its emphasis on cattle raising and its mastery of iron, the former uniting it with and the latter in some ways separating it from neighboring Celtic and Slavic societies.

GERMANIC CULTURE

Because Germanic settlements varied in size and form depending on the climate and topography of the region, generalizing about them is difficult. Usually, except along the sea coast, they were established on the edges of extensively cultivated natural clearings. The Germanic tribesmen settled along the coast of the North Sea between the Rhine and the Oder rivers inhabited fairly large timber houses supported by four rows of posts that divided the dwelling into three parallel rooms. These rooms were used not only for the family but also housed its precious cattle, whose body heat helped warm the family in winter. In this most typical form of Germanic building, humans occupied a large room separated from the remainder of the building by an interior wall with a doorway. Beyond this door lay a double row of animal stalls separated by a central corridor. The number of animals that could be accommodated varied considerably—some houses could hold no more than twelve while others could contain thirty or more.[2]

More inland, in the area of modern Westphalia and in the area between the Elbe and Saale rivers, Germanic peoples inhabited a different sort of house. Here, as for example in a village excavated at Harth bei Zwenkau (near modern Leipzig), the traditional dwelling was a sort of small, rectangular building already well known in the Bronze Age. These dwellings were also supported by upright posts but did not have internal support posts and were usually between five and seven meters long and only three to four meters wide. Alongside these houses were constructed a variety of buildings, including large houses with two rooms that might be as much as sixty square meters in area, long narrow houses with twenty-five square meters of floor space, and smaller, almost square buildings of about twelve square meters in area that apparently served for storage and as stalls for animals. Finally, some Germanic communities in the Elbe-Oder region, as, for example, at Zedau near Osterburg, constructed small "dug-outs," buildings partially underground and usually about twelve meters square, which probably served chiefly for storage.

Whatever the form of the dwellings, they tended to be grouped in small villages that supported themselves from a combination of farming and animal husbandry, supplemented where possible by fishing. At one site near modern Leipzig, for example, a village consisted of two of the larger houses described above and six smaller houses and their outbuildings.

The most important crop was barley, followed by wheat and oats. Beans and peas were also cultivated fairly extensively. Flax, raised more for oil than for linen, which was not widely used for clothing, was grown in coastal regions. The fields in which these crops were raised were organized into series of individual plots of roughly rectangular shape which varied greatly in size. Their organization and arrangement suggests that crop rotation was practiced to allow the soil to recover from intense cultivation. Fields were also improved by adding limestone and sometimes manure to the soil in long-farmed areas, although depleted soil was occasionally abandoned for new land brought into cultivation through slash-and-burn techniques.

Tilling these fields was performed in two manners, both apparently dating from the Bronze Age. Most fields were cultivated by using a fairly simple scratch plow. This simple wooden implement consisted essentially of a plowshare or coulter which cut into the ground and a handle to guide it as it was pulled by oxen. It had no moldboard to turn and thus aerate the soil and therefore had to be drawn across the field twice at right angles to prepare the soil properly.

In addition to these fairly light plows, some fields were cultivated with a heavier plow which was capable of turning and thus aerating the dense clay soil of northern Europe. Although such implements have not survived (hardly surprising since they were made of wood with only a bit of iron for the coulter), careful examination of the layers of topsoil and undersoil in some Celtic and Germanic fields indicates that the soil was in fact turned over in a way that strongly suggests the use of such an implement.

Grain was harvested with a sickle, in some sense a step backward from the use of both sickles and scythes in the Celtic world, although the iron sickles of the Germanic cultivators may have

been more effective than the bronze and flint tools of the Celts. The grain, left attached to the hay, was often roasted slightly to preserve it from spoilage and then stored in raised granaries made of wood and sealed with earth. When the grain was needed, it was separated from the hay and threshed. The kernels were ground using a simple hand grindstone of the sort in use for millennia. Progressively, around the time of Stelus, under the influence of neighboring Celts and Romans, some Germanic tribes between the Elbe and Rhine began to use more sophisticated and efficient turning grindstones. Once ground, the flour was mixed into a sort of porridge or made into dough that was baked on clay trays into flat cakes. A significant portion of the grain was also fermented into a strong, thick beer which was both an important source of nourishment and a major element in social interaction.

Cereal cultivation was essential for Germanic society, and Pliny in his *Natural History* correctly described the product thus obtained as the basic element of Germanic diet.[3] But farming had no social prestige, and the preservation, grinding, and preparing of cereals was left to women—a clear indication of the low status accorded it in this male-dominated society. The agricultural occupation that most interested Germanic males, especially in the relatively open coastal areas, was animal husbandry, in particular cattle raising. Julius Caesar had noted that "the Germans place no importance on cultivation, their nourishment comes for the most part from milk, cheese, and meat."[4] Undoubtedly he was incorrect in terms of nutritional reality, but he accurately reflected the cultural self-perception of the Germanic peoples. The number of cattle that one possessed determined social prestige and was the most significant material mark of wealth and status. Cattle were so much the quintessential indicator of wealth in traditional society that the modern English term "fee," which developed from the medieval term "fief," had its origin in the Germanic term *fihu* (modern German: *Vieh*), meaning cattle, chattels, and hence, in general, wealth. (The Latinate terms cattle, chattel, and capital underwent a similar and related development in late antiquity from the late Latin *captale*, meaning property in general or, more specifically, livestock.)

In addition to cattle raising, Stelus's contemporaries also raised, in descending order of importance, domestic pigs, sheep, goats, and horses as well as recently introduced chickens and geese. In spite of the image of Germanic society as constantly engaged in hunting, domestic animals accounted for virtually all of the meat in their diet. In no archaeological site that has been investigated do wild animal bones account for more than 8 percent of all animal remains found, while the average percentage of domesticated animal traces is closer to 97 percent. The most significant game animals were deer and wild boar. Wild cattle, the European bison, and the auroch were probably hunted for hides and horn as well as for meat. However, the almost insignificant percentage of bones from such animals found in village sites could be attributed to hunting for sport (actually practice for war) or the elimination of nuisance animals that competed with livestock for food instead of hunting specifically intended to supplement diet.

Given the importance of cattle raising, it should come as no surprise that the early Germanic peoples were quite systematic in the management of their herds. Like others, Stelus probably slaughtered, traded, or sold approximately 50 percent of his cattle before they reached the age of three-and-a-half years. These formed the expendable increase in the herd, which thus remained relatively constant in size. He kept the remainder of the herd for about ten years, during which time they served as breeding stock and provided milk. After that age, since they were less productive, they would be slaughtered, traded, or sold to the Romans.

Because they were foraging animals, hogs were particularly suited to more forested areas of Europe, and as one moves away from the coastal plains, the percentage of hogs raised increases while that of cattle decreases. They too were the object of systematic triage and management. About 22 percent were slaughtered in their first year, 28 percent in their second, and 35 percent in their third, when they had reached an average weight of 110 pounds.

Every portion of the animals was used either for food or for the production of clothing, shelter, and utensils. Meat was eaten raw, roasted, baked, or boiled. It could be preserved by smoking, drying, or, when supplies of salt were available, by salting. Milk

was consumed fresh or curded for storage. Butter was both con-
sumed and, in rancid form, used as seasoning, medicine, and as
a hair dressing—a practice noted with disgust by Romans (who
preferred to grease themselves with olive oil).

Crafts

In contrast to the Celts, Germanic peoples of the first centuries
produced fairly crude ceramic bowls and utensils. Clay, almost
universally available, was worked by hand, without the assis-
tance of a wheel, to make such simple objects as pots, vessels of
various kinds, ladles, and spinning weights. Such objects were
ornamented with fairly simple geometric designs either incised
or pressed on the objects with a rolling stamp that repeated a
pattern as it was moved across the damp clay. Although kilns
had long been known to the Celts, Germanic ceramic ware was
apparently fired in open wood fires. Such utensils, practical rather
than ornamental or status-signifying, were apparently, like cereal
production, the work of women.

Women too were responsible for weaving, spinning, and the
production of textiles, about which a great deal is known due to
the excellent state of preservation of clothing on bodies found
remarkably preserved in the anaerobic environments of the bogs
of the Weser-Ems region, Schleswig-Holstein, Jütland, and the
Danish islands. Some of these so-called "bog corpses" had simple
burials, but others were often apparently the victims of execu-
tions or ritual sacrifices. The bodies wore clothing made of hand-
spun wool woven on small looms. The wide variety of patterns
and styles of clothing apparently differentiated social status and
possibly communities. The people near the mouth of the Rhine
were particularly known for their fine woolens, which were even
popular within the Roman Empire.

In general, women wore long, sleeveless garments fastened at
the shoulders by *fibulae,* or brooches. The lower portion of the
dress was often pleated and rather full and was secured by a belt.
In addition, they wore blouses, undergarments, and a necker-
chief. Young girls often wore a sort of short woolen skirt and
possibly a short fur wrap.

Men wore woolen trousers, smocks, and cloaks as well as fur

wraps. Some trousers were full length and even had feet; others reached only to the knee and were followed by leg bindings. A smock was worn over the trousers and held fast by a belt. The cloak was a large rectangular piece of wool, decorated and fastened at the shoulder by a fibula. Leather shoes and caps, and, in winter, a fur cloak, completed the costume.

Clothing, along with hair and beard styles, was an important indicator of social identity. However its production did not enjoy high status in the society. The most important and sophisticated craft of the Germanic peoples of antiquity was ironworking. In the last century B.C. and the first century A.D., the production of iron increased dramatically in the Germanic world. The essential raw materials were near at hand: low-grade iron ore lay on or near the surface of the earth across much of northern Europe, and the great forests provided wood for charcoal production. Virtually every village or settlement had its own production center and specialists capable of producing iron implements and decorations. These men (for, like cattle raising, iron production was a male activity) built small, crude, but effective furnaces of earth in which they melted the ore on charcoal fires which, with the help of a bellows, could reach the necessary temperatures of 1,300 to 1,600° Celsius. The ovens could contain only about one liter of ore and were capable of producing, from the best available ore, at the most 150 to 250 grams of iron at a time. The entire process was time-consuming and required considerable resources and skill. It involved no less than eight separate steps, three demanding different, carefully controlled temperatures. Nevertheless, in spite of the small amount of iron produced when compared with the more massive techniques known in the civilized world at the time, the quality of iron was extremely high. In the hands of an experienced and skillful smith, this iron could be hammered, folded, reworked, and made into exceptionally high-quality steel. The finest products of these smiths, sword blades with cores of softer steel for flexibility and harder exteriors to hold their edge, were magnificent examples of the armorers' craft, far superior to the equipment of Roman troops.

However, while excellent objects could be produced, the over-

all amount of such objects was highly limited; the Germanic world remained iron-poor well into the Middle Ages, especially in weapons. Objects requiring large amounts of steel, such as long swords, were extremely rare, as were the long broad-headed lances that later were characteristic Germanic weapons. More common were iron arrow points and shorter, one-edged swords. Iron was also used as a central boss on their shields. The most frequent use of iron was in making tools for working wood, which remained the primary material for the tools of daily life, and for making small iron decorative objects. Quality depended on individual smiths, and most of what was produced was probably mediocre.

The agricultural and craft occupations of the Germanic peoples were primarily directed at a subsistence-level economy, not for trade purposes. Goods circulated within the Germanic world and between the Germanic world and beyond, but this circulation was not primarily through commerce. Among individuals and groups, pacific exchanges took the form primarily of gifts which, although they may have appeared voluntary, were in fact obligatory and normative. Gift-giving was a means of acquiring prestige and power—the real gain in an exchange accrued not to the receiver but to the giver, who thereby showed his superiority and placed the receiver in his debt.

An even greater source of prestige was the circulation of goods and chattel through raiding and warfare. This, more than anything else, characterized Germanic society and defined an individual's status. Raiding was carried on between tribes and between feuding clans within tribes, and booty consisted primarily of cattle and slaves. Germanic society found its purpose, its value, its identity in warfare, and both its economy and its society were structured to this end.

Society

The various groups we have just described never thought of themselves as one "people" who could be assigned a collective name. The term "German" was imposed by the Gauls; the modern *Deutsch* means simply "the people" and developed in the late ninth century. Nevertheless, scholars have long at-

tempted to describe "the Germans" as a whole as well as to sub-
divide them according to some objective criteria. The first such
modern attempts, based exclusively on linguistic evidence from
a later, postmigration period, divided the Germanic world into
North Germanic peoples, including the inhabitants of Scan-
dinavia; East Germanic peoples, including the Goths, Burgun-
dians, Vandals; and West Germanic peoples, including, among
others, the Franks, Saxons, Bavarians, and Alemanni. Whatever
the merits of such a division for linguists of postmigration Ger-
manic languages (and in fact even here there is considerable
dispute), this schema does little to help us understand the dif-
ferences among the Germanic peoples of the first and second
centuries. More useful distinctions have been made on the sorts
of material differences described above and compared with later
linguistic evidence. These suggest that a more useful way of dis-
tinguishing significant differences is to divide the Germanic peo-
ples into the Elbe Germanic tribes, that is, those peoples who
lived between the Elbe and Oder rivers; the Rhine-Weser Ger-
manic tribes, those living along these two rivers closer to the
Roman *limes*; and the North Sea Germanic tribes, who lived
along the coast. These groupings seem to reflect certain cultural
and religious affiliations that occasionally manifested themselves
in the formation of fairly wide confederations of peoples within
these groups for specific purposes. However, these groups should
not be thought of as social, ethnic, or political entities. The ac-
tual structure of Germanic society was far too fluid and complex
for that.

The physical remains of Germanic settlements provide im-
portant evidence concerning the social structure of these peo-
ples. As we have seen, they tended to live in small villages. In
spite of attempts to see theirs as a primitive form of communism
and equality, already in the first century B.C., Germanic com-
munities display a wide variation in wealth and status, as well
as important indications of what might be called a remarkably
homogeneous aristocracy.

The largest class in Germanic communities was that of free
men whose social status was largely determined by the number
of cattle they possessed and whose freedom was confirmed in

their participation in warfare. Within a village, the number of cattle an individual owned could vary greatly, indicating considerable differentiation in wealth. In one village excavated near Wesermünde, West Germany, for example, one finds some houses with stalls for only twelve cows while others could have accommodated as many as thirty-two. In other villages, the arrangement of small buildings around quite large, substantial ones suggests that at least some individuals in the society probably had dependents who were housed in outbuildings around the leader's home.

Slaves, usually prisoners of war, also formed a part of Germanic society. They were normally settled in individual households and were required to provide certain amounts of foodstuff, cattle, and textiles to their masters, although they might also be used as herdsmen or house slaves.

Germanic society was unambiguously patriarchal, and individual kindreds were organized under a male leader. The individual household was dominated by the father, who held authority over all members—his wife or occasionally wives, children, and slaves. Germanic peoples practiced resource polygyny, that is, those wealthy enough to do so might have two or more wives; others had only one.

The household was integrated into the larger kindred known as the Sip (German: *Sippe*), or clan. This wider circle of kin, whose size and composition is extremely difficult for historians to determine, probably did not extend beyond fifty households and seems to have included not only agnatic (paternally related) but cognatic (based on bilateral descent) groups. The primary unifying principles of the clan seem to have been, internally, the shared perception of relationships reinforced by a special "peace" that made violent conflict within the clan a crime for which no compensation or atonement could be made, an incest taboo, and possibly some rights to property. Externally, the most powerful uniting principle was the obligation to participate in interkindred feuds on behalf of one's kin and thus to be liable for the actions of one's kindred. Such feuds seem more than anything else to have constituted and defined the extent of kinship.

The kindred, although fundamental, was also essentially unstable and was in a constant process of division and transformation. Largely defined by the obligation of peace within and war without, every breach of the peace could lead to the foundation of a new clan, as could every failure to accept the obligation of mutual help. Likewise, since these groups were bilateral, important marriages might well result in the absorption of smaller, less successful clans into larger ones. This same instability was present to an even greater degree in the larger social unit, the tribe.

The Germanic tribe, more than any other Germanic institution, has been the victim of an uncritical acceptance of Greco-Roman ideas concerning tribes inherited from both the Romans' own early traditions of tribal origins and from Greek ethnography. The tribe was a constantly changing grouping of people bound together by shared perceptions, traditions, and institutions. As these commonalities changed, tribes changed; they expanded to absorb other groups, they split apart to form new tribes, they disappeared into more powerful tribes. Thus, throughout the tribal history of the Germanic peoples, these groups were more processes than stable structures, and ethnogenesis, or tribal formation, was constant, although certain historical moments saw this process accelerated.

According to Tacitus, the Germanic peoples believed that they were descended from the god Tuisto, whose son Mannus was the ancestor of them all. This belief in common ancestry is shown in the names for the tribe: *Stamm* in modern German, *Theoda* in Old High German, *ethnos* in Greek, and *gens* in Latin, all terms derived from words implying kinship and thus emphasizing the fiction of a shared biological, genealogical origin from some common ancestor. The belief in this common mythical ancestor and hence in the equally mythic purity of blood was an important constituent of tribal identity and the foundation of other important characteristics of the tribe. In this sense, the tribe was but a large clan or family, sharing common values and a common "peace" which made cooperation appropriate.

In addition to being unified in their belief in a common ori-

gin, tribes shared cultural traditions. Although traditionally scholars have emphasized common language as first among these cultural traditions, it is not at all clear that language was so important to early tribes. The central cultural characteristics seemed to have been clothing, styles of hair, ornamentation, types of weapons, material culture, religious cult, and a shared oral history. All of these served not only to distinguish one tribe from another, but also to clarify the social distinctions within a tribe.

Shared common ancestry myths and cultural traditions formed the basis for a community of law and particularly of peace. Essential to the survival of the tribe was a shared peace or sense of nonaggression that made cooperative efforts possible. This peace was preserved and embodied in tribal "law," that is, the customary way by which clans interacted with each other and handled disputes. Our word "friend" is closely related to the German word *Frieden,* peace. Tribal members were friends; they shared a peace or pact of traditional "law." However, unlike the peace within the clan, this peace was not deemed to have been destroyed by violent dispute; in fact revenge and feuding were the normal means by which clans within a tribe handled their conflicts. The tribal "law" did not so much forbid or discourage interclan violence as it set the rules according to which these feuds were to be carried on and set certain limits to the times and places of these feuds. In particular, violence was forbidden during religious festivals, at the assemblies of the free men of the tribe, and during military expeditions. Failure to observe the peace at these times might result in the trial of the offender by the tribe itself and either his execution or banishment. By declaring him an outlaw—literally one who was no longer protected by the customary peace of the tribe—the offender might be killed by anyone without risking revenge.

Finally, the tribe was a political community. Although primarily organized according to clans, the necessities of united action, particularly of a military nature, called for larger political units. These could be larger or smaller than the groups that shared the other cultural, mythic, and legal customs. For example, various tribes might share a common cult tradition with-

out having common political institutions; on the other hand, different groups might unite temporarily for military purposes.

The supreme political unit of the tribe was the assembly of its free male warriors. This assembly, called the "Thing," served as the court of highest instance for dealing with individuals who had broken fundamental elements of the tribal pact, an occasion to meet and to reinforce ties among members, and, often, an assembly which preceded a military campaign. The organization and leadership of this assembly, and indeed of the tribal units, varied widely among tribes and within the same tribe across time. Within some tribes, the free men from particular areas (gaus) were under the leadership of "princes," who may have been selected by the warriors or who may have come from leading families, or both. These princes led them in battle and at other times served as leaders of roughly the territorial units of the tribe.

At the top of some tribes stood a figure whose title is only poorly translated by our English word "king." Apparently Germanic peoples before the migration period had two sorts of kings, one essentially religious, the other military, although not all tribes possessed both. The first was what sources call the *thiudans.* This king was apparently chosen from a royal family, that is the family with which the ethnic, historical, and cultural traditions of the tribe were most closely identified. He was the king described by Tacitus as having been selected "ex nobiliate," that is, because of his noble family origins. Presumably this king was closely tied to the traditional, relatively stable "established" tribe living in perhaps violent relationship with its neighbors, but at least in a state of rough equilibrium within this violence. The *thiudans* was closely associated to the Germanic (in fact, Indo-European) god Tiwaz, who was the protector of a stable social order and guarantor of laws, fertility, and peace.

The role of this king varied among the Germanic peoples. With some, he served largely a religious role, with others he presided at assemblies; elsewhere he might also exercise military command. But some tribes did not have this position at all. In still others, military authority was entrusted to a nonroyal

leader, called by Tacitus a general (*dux*). Chosen for his military prowess, he rather than the "king" assumed command of the tribe in warfare. This military leader will be discussed later in detail.

The Comitatus

As we have seen, the tribe was built of family or familylike units united through common beliefs and social bonds. In contrast to this unity-enforcing structure stood another social group that cut across kindreds and even tribal units and could be at once a source of tribal strength and of enormous instability. This was the warrior band, termed *comitatus* by Tacitus and *Gefolgschaft* by modern German scholars. Warfare, as we have seen, was the primary activity of Germanic men—it largely determined their prestige and their wealth. Within the society, therefore, some (but by no means all) young free men eager for glory associated themselves with important leaders well known for their ability and formed elite groups of mounted warriors. The youths entered into close, personal bonds with their leader, who was responsible for providing for them, equipping them, and leading them to victory and booty. For their part, they were totally devoted to him, and in the case that he should fall it was considered shameful if they should not also fight to the death.

These *comitatus* were not the fundamental military unit of the tribe. They were instead individual warrior societies organized for constant plunder and fighting. Moreover, while they might participate in tribal wars, their own expeditions were not tribal wars. Instead, they were individual raids which could endanger the peace within the tribe or the armed truce that might exist among tribes. Thus these warrior bands were destabilizing groups within an already fragile tribal structure. However, they were also potential nuclei around which might form new tribes. Successful warrior leaders acquired great prestige and power through the size of their following, and in time tensions within the tribe might lead to the splintering off of the warrior band and its dependents to form a new tribe.

Obviously the nature of Germanic society, with its military structure, loose kindreds, and weak central organization all con-

tributed to constant instability. Infratribal conflict was the norm, and unity could only be maintained through joint hostility against other tribes, which occupied the warriors and maintained the prestige of princes, and through religious and social rituals that sought to reinforce the solidarity of the people. Chief among the latter were exchanges of daughters in marriage, an attempt to unite kindreds, thereby preventing or ending feuds. Other social rituals for eliminating conflict were the expressions of solidarity made at banquets and drinking bouts. These occasions were extremely important in village tribal society—sharing food and especially drink were vital in maintaining fragile social bonds. Of course, banqueting and drinking could also become all too easily destructive contests, and drunken arguments could awaken old grievances and lead to new violence.

Small wonder then that tribes seem to appear and disappear with great frequency. Inherently unstable, these units constantly underwent transformation as kindreds feuded and split apart, warrior bands struck out to establish themselves as new tribes, and as tribes weakened by internal divisions were conquered and absorbed into other tribes. Still, so long as this process took place among Germanic, Celtic, and Slavic peoples all at rightly the same level of material and social organization, this instability remained in a state of equilibrium. But this equilibrium would be destroyed by contact with Rome.

ROMAN INFLUENCE ON THE GERMANIC PEOPLES

Although the Germanic peoples were intimately tied to and often indistinguishable from their Celtic and Slavic neighbors, even in the first century Germanic society did not exist in isolation from the Roman world. Rome made its presence felt throughout the Germanic world in a variety of extremely significant ways. First, in the narrow zone of approximately 100 kilometers wide along the *limes,* fairly intensive commercial interaction between Romans and barbarians brought Roman products to the Germanic world. In this zone, one finds that a great variety of Roman goods were in use, and as transactions such as that between Stelus and the Roman merchant indicate,

Germanic herdsmen were rapidly becoming involved in the monetized economy of the Roman world.

While everyday products of Roman provincial manufacture did not extend much into the hinterland of "Free Germany," Roman luxury products apparently attracted the attention of Germanic elites everywhere. Throughout northern Europe, from the Rhine to beyond the Oder, archaeologists have found remarkably similar graves containing weapons, jewelry, and Roman luxury exports. These so-called Lübsow-type graves indicate the importance to the Germanic elite of Roman products and Roman lifestyles, as well as the similarities and possibly interconnections among elites throughout the region. We do not know whether these Roman luxury goods were acquired through trade or, more likely, through gift exchange. However, by the first century, well before the Germanic migrations, a Germanic aristocracy which defined itself by its military role was beginning to come under the spell of Rome.

The effects of the penetration of Roman commercial and material culture on Germanic society were profound. First, the introduction of money and the expansion of markets for Germanic cattle, hides, and probably other products such as furs, amber, and slaves, widened the extremes of social differentiation within this society. Not that before this time the Germanic peoples had lived in some forest utopia of primitive communism; we have seen that differences in sizes of cattle herds indicated a hierarchical structure of society. However, while differences in cattle herds might mean a twofold or threefold difference in wealth, the possibility of accumulating specie and luxury goods from the Empire could greatly accentuate the differences among individuals and families. By extending the distance between members of Germanic tribes, the power and prestige of traditional leaders was thus greatly increased.

Second, the desire for Roman articles, which could be acquired only by trade or by warfare, transformed the range of activity and extent of interaction among Germanic peoples. As tribes were drawn into the Roman commercial network, their leaders were necessarily drawn into political relationships with Romans, a result specifically desired by Roman imperial officials.

From the Roman perspective, it was highly desirable to have Germanic tribes ruled by authoritarian leaders who could negotiate on behalf of their tribes binding treaties with Rome and whose personal loyalty to Rome could be maintained by gifts. Also, it was desirable to make such tribes dependent on Roman sources of iron, grain, and other exports. Thus Roman policy aimed at the stabilization, in Roman terms, of barbarian political structures and the development of barbarian economies in order to secure markets for Roman exports.

However, the net result of this Roman policy was to destabilize German society still further, to accentuate social and economic differentiation within Germanic tribes, and to form within these peoples pro- and anti-Roman factions that often led to the splintering of tribal units. This destabilization spread like a chain reaction across the Germanic world and set into motion a tumultuous process of rapid ethnogenesis and social transformation that led to the conflict which had no name in the Germanic world but which we have already encountered from the other side of the *limes* as the Marcomannian war. Whole new peoples and confederations were created in its aftermath, among these the people with whom we are most concerned—the Franks.

The Romans viewed the Marcomannian war primarily as a confrontation along the Danubian border between Romans and barbarians. However, even they were well aware that they faced many more barbarian tribes in addition to the Marcomanni and Quadi, two tribal confederations closest to the Roman *limes*. These two groups had long belonged to the belt of Roman client states which lay along the frontier, and their relationship with Rome had been intimate and largely pacific. Ambiguous archaeological evidence even suggests that the chieftains of these groups were well on the way to becoming Roman in their style of life and in their military fortifications. They may have occupied rustic villas and camps constructed for them by the Romans or at least made of building materials supplied by the Roman legions. However, during the war, the Marcomanni and Quadi were joined by elements of numerous other groups. During the negotiations with the Romans after the first invasion in A.D. 167,

the Marcomannian king Ballomarius spoke for at least eleven tribes.

Probably even more groups were involved. Archaeological excavations have found materials of northern Germanic origin dating from this period in the regions of modern Bohemia and Austria, the regions from whence came the Marcomanni and the Quadi. Moreover, Roman arms that had probably been taken as booty by Germanic warriors and later buried with them have been discovered as far north as Schleswig-Holstein, Jütland, and the island of Fyn in modern Denmark. Taken together, this evidence suggests that tribes from as far away as southern Scandinavia took part in the confrontation. This evidence also suggests that, as the Romans suspected, the pressure on the Danubian frontier was caused by the movement of peoples from the north. It appears thus that the whole of Free Germany was in a period of disequilibrium and stress.[5]

Nor were the Marcomannian wars the only effects of internal Germanic changes felt by Rome. Everywhere on the Rhine-Danube frontier, the effects of the inner barbarian upheavals were experienced: in 166/67 the Langobards (Lombards) and Obierii were pressing on the Danube; in 170 the Chatti were raiding across the Rhine while the Sarmats and Costobocii were active on the lower Danube; in 172 the Chauci from southern Scandinavia were raiding the coast of modern France; and in 174 various groups of "Germans" were pressing Rhaetia. Thus the Germanic world was apparently convulsed from one end to the other, and the pressures on the Roman world were but the distant echoes of this internal upheaval. What was taking place was a radical restructuring of the Germanic world, a process in which formerly powerful tribal confederations like the Marcomanni were splintered, old tribes disappeared or were radically reorganized, and new "peoples" and confederations, such as the Franks and Alemanni, took their place. In the course of these transformations, many groups, such as the Goths, who had previously been subordinate to larger groups, suddenly expanded into major confederations and chiefs led their followers into new areas, generally to the south and east, while others sought protection through the amalgamation of smaller groups

into new peoples. In all, the last decades of the second century were the most vital period of ethnogenesis in Germanic history.

THE NEW GERMANIC SOCIETIES

The unrest of the latter part of the second century radically changed the structure of Germanic tribes, both those closest to the Roman *limes* and those so far away that the Romans had only a vague knowledge of their existence.

In this period of constant sustained warfare, the already important role of tribal military activity became even more essential. In order to survive, the tribe had to become thoroughly militarized—it became an army. The transformation increased the significance of the role of nonroyal war leaders within Germanic tribes. These commanders had traditionally been entrusted with the conduct of warfare. However, their attempts to turn their limited military role into a broader and more permanent command, attempts often made with the encouragement of the Romans, had met with determined opposition from their tribes. Now, when organized tribal warfare became a constant, all-consuming aspect of existence, their status increased greatly. As successful military leaders, these commanders, designated by the Celtic loanword *reiks*, although originally not necessarily of royal lineage in the sense of the *thiudans*, could claim that victory was a sign of the gods' favor and thus add a religious aura to their position.

Under the command of the *reiks*, or, as called by modern German scholars, *Heerkönig* (literally: "army-king"), the identity and composition of the tribe, always an essentially unstable group at best, underwent further transformation. The dislocation of traditional areas of settlement led to a deemphasis on the agrarian traditions of the community and, along with it, on the cult of fertility gods such as Tiwaz. In their place many Germanic tribes turned to Woden or Oden, the god of war and the particular deity of the military kings, who looked to him as the giver of victory and, through victory, a new sort of religious justification for their position. The new cult was more appro-

priate for the highly mobile and rapidly changing nature of the tribe.

The victories created new traditions, and participation in them centered on the warrior king as the agent (and often descendant) of Woden. This in turn transformed the community identity. Although the old tribal names might continue to be used, the identity of the tribe was now related to the identity of these warrior leaders. Anyone who fought with them was a member of their tribe, regardless of previous ethnic, linguistic, political, or cultic origins. Anyone else was either enemy or slave.

But military leadership, however brilliant, could not alone transform the charismatic power of a war leader into an enduring institutional kingship. A *reiks* who hoped to raise himself and his family above the other aristocratic clans of his polyethnic tribe needed greater wealth, honors, and support than he could garner alone. For this, barbarian leaders needed Rome and the emperor, who, even for the inhabitants of "Free Germany," was alone the great king whose support they eagerly courted.

Along the northern borders of the Eastern and Western Empire, these military leaders sought the financial and political support of alliances with Rome. They needed Roman titles and office to legitimize their positions vis-à-vis not only their own peoples but in their relationships with other tribes as well; they needed Roman grain and iron to feed and equip their warriors; and they needed Roman gold and silver to "represent" their high position through conspicuous and dazzling displays of precious metals. All of this Rome was, as we have seen in Chapter One, eager to provide, but at a price. Rome needed most the one thing that the barbarians could provide—military manpower. Together, barbarian warlords and Roman emperors cooperated in the creation of the new barbarian world.

The Eastern Empire and the Goths

The course of this process in the East can be best illustrated by examining the gradual creation of the Goths, the barbarian tribe most respected and feared by other barbarians and Romans alike in late antiquity. Thus, instead of providing a com-

prehensive view of the various barbarians who entered the Empire, we will examine in some detail the successive stages of Gothic ethnogenesis. Although their legends, formed after their astounding victories within the Empire and their territorialization in Italy and Spain, speak as though the whole people had migrated from Scandinavia to the east before settling around the Black Sea, their real history, as recently illuminated by Austrian historian Herwig Wolfram, indicates quite a different past. Instead, one sees a people with widely differing ethnic, cultural, and geographical backgrounds become Goths, and in the process transform the meaning of what it was to be a Goth.[6]

In the first century A.D. the people who called themselves the Goths, or *Gutonen* (the name probably simply means "the people," as do many early names of tribes), inhabited an area between the Oder and the Vistula rivers and were closely allied, and often dominated, by three other Germanic-Celtic groups, the Vandals, the Lugii, and the Rugii. In their cultic and material existence they hardly differed from other closely related barbarian groups, although, if one can believe Tacitus, already in the first century their king was unusually powerful—he seems to have combined the power of the *reiks* and the religious prestige of the *thiudans*. These kings, with their central kernel of warriors, were the bearers of a tradition and an efficient military organization that could attract non-Goth warriors to fight alongside them. In little more than five generations this small, dependent tribe grew into a major power in the barbarian world. It was in large part the shock waves of their consolidation along the right bank of the Vistula River that set in motion the violent changes which the Romans experienced as the Marcomannian war.

In the later second and third century some of the bearers of this "Gothic" tradition began gradually to infiltrate to the south and east, ultimately traveling to the banks of the Dnieper, near present-day Kiev. Not that the entire "Gothic" people migrated as one to this region, but rather that the various Pontic, Sarmatic, Slavic, and Germanic peoples already in the Dnieper region were organized by the Gothic leadership into a powerful confederation under the Gothic military kingship. From here,

the continuous expansion of the reconstituted Gothic people came into direct and violent conflict with Rome in 238 as these Goths, to which the Romans gave the name of the ancient inhabitants of the region, Scythians, began raiding and plundering the eastern provinces of the Empire around the Black Sea under the command of their king, Cniva. The resulting wars were far more devastating to the Empire than those against the Marcomanni. The Goths penetrated far into the Empire and in 251 even managed to kill Emperor Dacius and his son when they attempted to prevent the Goths from returning home with their booty. Only with enormous difficulty were the emperors Claudius II (who died in 269) and Aurelian able to stem the onslaught of the "Scythians" and finally defeat them in 271.

The defeat was carried out with typical Roman thoroughness and the unified Gothic kingdom was virtually destroyed. But just as victory could be the decisive event in the creation of a people, so, too, could defeat. Out of the ruins of the Gothic confederation developed two "new" Gothic peoples—east of the Dniester the royal family of the Amals reorganized as a smaller Gothic kingdom, while along the lower Danube arose a decentralized but vital territorialized Gothic society under the leadership of aristocratic families, particularly the Balts, who carried on part of the old Gothic tradition. In 332 Ariarich, the Balt leader of this polyethnic confederation known as the Tervingi, who eschewed the title of king in favor of judge, concluded the first of a series of treaties, or *foedera,* with the emperor Constantine and thus acquired the necessary peace and support to consolidate a territorial state within the sphere of influence of the Empire.

BALTS AND TERVINGIANS

Tervingian society and culture were complex mixtures of the various groups composing it. The Gothic formula of political organization built around powerful war leaders could be quickly and effectively expanded, so that a small group of aristocrats could organize any large population of warrior peoples into a "Gothic" confederation. The "Gothic people" were thus hardly

a tribe in the sense of a group of common origin but rather the political constellation of smaller groups, or *kunja,* with various cultural, linguistic, and geographical origins led by their individual *reiks* and sharing a common cult. Different *reiks* ruled from strongholds in the countryside rather than from villages or towns, although the former certainly existed in this ancient region. The *reiks* governed his region with the assistance of his military following, his *comitatus,* while even free villagers were largely excluded from the political process. This is a long way from the participatory political organization described by Tacitus, and for one main reason. The Tervingian Goths were not "Germans" in Tacitus's sense, but were a Near Eastern society. The unifying elements of the Gothic confederation were the army, which was largely composed of infantry except for a small elite cavalry, and the traditions carried on by the Balt family.

Following the conclusion of the treaty with Rome, the Tervingian Goths served as generally faithful federates. Not only did they undertake expeditions against their barbarian neighbors on behalf of the Romans, but many of them served individually or in groups for varying amounts of time within the Roman army. In fact, until around 400 Gothic military commanders were among the most important *magistri militum* in the eastern half of the Empire. Exquisite jewelry, vessels, and decorative objects produced in the Tervingian state during this period indicate the extent to which Roman, Greek, and other craft and artistic traditions were valued and imitated by the Gothic elites. So deeply did Roman imperial values and structures penetrate this society that even the trappings of Roman constitutional structures were admired and imitated in this border state, although submitted to what might be called an *interpretatio barbarica,* in contrast with the better known *interpretatio Romana* of which I have spoken earlier. The most striking example of this is a copy of a Roman commemorative medallion found in a treasure hoard at Szilágysomlyó (in modern Romania) on which are the images of emperors Valentinian I and Valens (ruled jointly 364–375) with the legend "Regis Romanorum" (Kings of the Romans). This is probably a Latin translation of the term *thiudans.* To the Goths, the emperor

was the great king, an essential if sometimes ambivalent element in their own political framework.

Admiration for and cooperation with the Empire was not unqualified within the Tervingian confederation. One can speak of pro- and anti-Roman factions within the aristocracy since various Gothic leaders attempted to consolidate or improve their positions within the confederation by either looking to Constantinople for support or by attempting to unite the Tervingians against the Romans. On the other side of the Danube various factions within the Empire attempted to win Gothic cooperation in order to advance their own political ambitions. Under the great Balt leader Athanaric (reigned 365–376/81) the Tervingi relationship with the Empire was particularly tense. His father had lived as a Gothic hostage in Constantinople, and although the emperor had had a statue of him erected in the New Rome, he had had his son swear never to set foot within the Roman Empire. The Balt judges apparently saw Roman political maneuvers as a potential threat to their control of the confederation, and Athanaric fought a series of engagements against Emperor Valens, which ended in 369 with a treaty allowing the Goths to deal virtually as equals rather than as federates of the Romans.

Athanaric's difficult relations with the Romans were closely tied to his internal problems with competitors for control of the Gothic confederation and in particular with the strongly pro-Roman group led by the Tervingians Fritigern and Alaviv. The internal rivalry between the conservative Athanaric, who sought to strengthen the unity of the confederation around the ancient Gothic tradition, and the *reiks* Fritigern was largely played out in terms of religious opposition and persecution. Among the various groups within the confederation were numbers of Christians of various sorts who had been captured in war or whose communities had been absorbed by the Goths. The most important of these individuals was Wulfila (c. 311–383), who was probably the son of a Gothic father of important social status and a Cappadocian mother whose parents or grandparents had most likely been captured by a Gothic raiding party in 257. In the 330s he visited Constantinople as part of a Gothic mission

and apparently acquired a good education in Latin and Greek. In 341 at Antioch he was consecrated "Bishop of the Christians in the Getic [Gothic] land" and returned to spread his faith, which had previously been introduced by both Latin and Greek missionaries. His high status, his official commission, and his excellent education that enabled him to translate the Bible into the Gothic language, all contributed to his success in proselytizing the Goths.

Wulfila's own position on the major theological issue of the fourth century, the divinity of Christ, was a compromise between the position of those who came to be called the orthodox, who maintained that Christ was one in substance with the Father, and that of the Arians, who denied His divinity altogether. Instead of completely accepting one of these positions, Wulfila chose not to speak of the substance of the divine at all. For this, he and his later Gothic followers have been incorrectly classified as Arians.

Although Wulfila was the most important and successful Christian missionary, others were also active. The orthodox church was represented by Bishop Vetranio of Tomi and found support within the Tervingian aristocracy. The rival Arians were particularly supported by the opposition group led by the Tervingian Fritigern, who hoped to please the Arian emperor Valens. Athanaric saw all varieties of Christianity as a threat to the Gothic cultic tradition, which had been one of the major constitutional elements of its political success, and began a number of prosecutions, the most important of which started in 369 and was aimed indiscriminately at all varieties of Christians. During these internal conflicts the issue was determined from without—in 376 the military confederation under Athanaric was destroyed by the sudden arrival from Asia of the Huns in the area of the Black Sea, and the infrastructure of the Gothic state was replaced by an equally polyethnic Hunnic confederation. The majority of the Tervingian elite abandoned Athanaric and followed Fritigern and Alaviv across the Danube into the Empire. Athanaric himself had to break the vow he had made to his father and seek protection in Constantinople, where he was received with honor in

381 only to die two weeks after his arrival. This crisis was the prelude to a new phase of Gothic ethnogenesis. Henceforth the followers of Fritigern entered history as the Visigoths.

<div align="center">AMALS AND GREUTUNGS</div>

While the Balts were organizing the disparate peoples along the lower Danube and Black Sea into a Tervingian confederation, the remains of the royal family of Amals was organizing in southern Russia a new Gothic kingdom. The first king of this group was Ostrogotha, who lived in the first generation after the Roman victory of 271, and can in a sense be seen as the founder of the Gothic kingdom in its new, reduced form. Because this kingdom lay so far from the Roman frontier, we know little of its history, except that it, too, must have been a polyethnic confederation organized according to the "Gothic" pattern of central military kingship and a thoroughly militarized aristocracy. This steppe confederation was known to the Romans as the Greuthungs, or Scythians, the former being a new ethnic label, the latter a designation of steppe peoples inherited from Greek antiquity. Just as the more western confederation continued the cultural and military traditions of the region under the political control of the Balt aristocracy, the Greuthung kingdom, although identifying itself with Gothic tradition, was thoroughly a steppe people in its customs and ethnic groups, particularly in the military tradition of mounted steppe warriors.

The Greuthung king who emerges from legend into history was Ermanaric, "The most noble of the Amals" according to later Gothic history and the king of a wide variety of conquered peoples of the Russian steppes. His kingdom commanded the traditional trade routes connecting the Black Sea and the Slavic world. His control of this confederation was by no means undisputed, and he was engaged in a deadly struggle for control with other groups when the Huns' arrival in 376 shattered his kingdom. Ermanaric killed himself in what was possibly a self-sacrifice to the gods, and the majority of his people were absorbed into the Hunnic confederation. A minority continued to resist for about one year before they, too, were subjugated or fled like

their Tervingian counterparts into the Roman Empire. Only after the disintegration of the Hunnic confederation would those under the Amal tradition reemerge as the Ostrogoths.

FROM TERVINGIAN TO·VISIGOTH

After their settlement in southern Gaul, the Visigoths looked back on the forty-year period between 376 and 416, during which they concluded a treaty with Emperor Constantius, as analogous to the forty years the Hebrew people wandered in the Sinai. The analogy, which carried the Gothic theological and political interpretation of themselves as the new chosen people, was also appropriate in that just as the Sinai period created the Hebrew people from the disparate group of refugees who left Egypt, the forty years of uncertainty and wandering within the Empire transformed the Tervingian refugees under Fritigern into what history knows as the Visigoths. This final process of the creation of a territorial kingdom within the Empire was possible because the Gothic people, traditionally organized as a Gothic army, could become a Roman army and its leaders could acquire legitimacy and support as duly appointed Roman officers. The formation of a Visigothic state, rather than the introduction of a barbarian, much less a "Germanic" society into the West, was the adaptation of the "Gothic system" within the context of a Roman administrative and military system.

We have seen in the previous chapter the reception of the Goths under Fritigern by the Romans and the desperation which led them to risk a confrontation with the emperor himself at Adrianopolis—a confrontation from which they emerged victorious. However the victory at Adrianopolis was short-lived. The Goths needed food and in the long run could obtain this only through cooperation with the Roman Empire. Thus after a short and futile period of rampage, in 382 Fritigern concluded a treaty with Emperor Theodosius, according to whose terms the Goths were settled in Dacia and Thrace as a federated people who were to retain their command structure intact and to serve the Empire when needed.

The settlement did not last long, but it did provide time for

the emergence of a new and powerful Gothic leader, Alaric, whose position was much more that of a true monarch than had been the Tervingian judges such as Fritigern and even Athanaric. Although frequently betrayed by the imperial government, Alaric's entire career was dominated by his futile quest for recognition and legitimacy as the supreme military commander in the Empire. Alaric led his people, who were again threatened by the Huns, out of Thrace into the Balkans, Greece, and the Illyrica. In 397 the emperor, who had previously viewed Alaric not as a king but as a tyrant or usurper, was forced to name him the military commander of the eastern Illyrican prefecture—a move that provided the model for future dealings with the commanders of barbarian *gentes* within the Empire. This new treaty lasted even less time than the first, and in 401 Alaric once more led his army across the Empire. This final expedition culminated in the sack of Rome in 410. Roman booty was not, however, his primary need—it was food. Alaric had really sought to lead his people to North Africa, a goal ultimately reached by another barbarian people, the Vandals.

Alaric died the same year he captured Rome, and his successor, Athaulf, ultimately concluded a treaty with the emperor Honorius to rid Gaul of the usurper Iovinus. In 413 he led his Goths as a Roman army into Aquitaine. Only when the emperor broke his part of the bargain to supply the Goths did Athaulf seize the major cities of the region. Athaulf, like Alaric, sought imperial recognition and approval, and in 414 concluded a Roman marriage with Galla Placidia, daughter of Emperor Theodosius, to connect his family with that of the Theodosian dynasty and thus repair his relationship with Constantinople. He also worked with the Aquitainian aristocracy to establish a territorial lordship not just over Goths but over all the region's population. His assassination in 415 ended the hopes of this program. His successor, Walia, led the Goths into Spain hoping to resume Alaric's move toward North Africa, but was unable to reach his desired destination and was ultimately enrolled in Roman service. He returned to Aquitaine, where he and his Goths, at once a barbarian people and a Roman army, were settled, creating the Visigothic kingdom of Toulouse. This marked the end

of the forty years of wandering and the culmination of the long process of Visigothic ethnogenesis.

FROM GREUTUNG TO OSTROGOTH

After Ermanaric's death, the majority of the Greuthungs were integrated into the Hunnic confederation, but a small group fled to the Empire and were settled among the various federates in Pannonia. Although the Goths felt a strong ambivalence toward the Hunnic conquerors, those who remained with the Huns served Attila faithfully, even following him into Gaul under three Gothic royal brothers—Valamir, Thiudimir, and Vidimir. They also absorbed many of the Hunnic traditions, adopting their clothing, weapons, and even the practice of skull deformation of children. Further evidence of the close relationship between the Huns and the Goths is shown in their sharing of names: Attila itself and many other names of Huns are actually Gothic, while many Goths bore Hunnic names. However, even while serving the Huns, the Goths retained their own organization and even consolidated their sense of identity around the traditions of their early kings. However, between 378 and 453, when the Hunnic confederation collapsed with Attila's death, a new identity and a new name emerged for this group: the Ostrogoths.

After the disintegration of the Hunnic confederation, some of the newly independent and reconstituted Ostrogoths, like many other former members of the confederation, such as the Gepids and Rugii, entered into a treaty with the Empire and were settled as federates in Pannonia. A militarized tribe such as the Ostrogoths could only prosper in a region in which the Roman agricultural infrastructure was intact, something Pannonia had long lost through the clashes with barbarians. Thus whenever the usual payments from the Empire were not forthcoming, the Ostrogoths were tempted to break their treaty and conduct raids into the Empire. At the conclusion of one such revolt in 459, the young son of Thiudimir, Theodoric, was sent as hostage to Constantinople. He lived there from about the age of eight to eighteen, during which time he gained an intimate knowledge of the Empire and in particular of the imperial system of government.

Shortly after his return home, Theodoric took over the king-
dom along with his father upon the death of his uncle Valamir,
and shortly thereafter led the Goths into Illyricum, as had the
Visigoth Alaric in the previous century. There he was much
more successful in playing the political games within the Em-
pire, and by 485 his cooperation with the emperor Zeno had
won for him the position of *magister militum,* the consulate, and
even adoption into the imperial Flavian house. Nevertheless, he
was equally willing to use his army against the emperor to fur-
ther his own position.

Hoping to rid himself of both Theodoric and the Germanic
king Odoacer, in 488 Zeno sent Theodoric to eliminate the lat-
ter. To do this, Theodoric gathered an extremely heterogeneous
army of barbarians and Romans and began his ultimately vic-
torious war against Odoacer, which left him, by the end of 493,
the undisputed commander of Italy. The treaty that had legiti-
mized his invasion of Italy had granted him supreme power in
the peninsula until Zeno would personally appear to take com-
mand. But by then Zeno had died, and his successor was too oc-
cupied with other matters to appear in the West. Thus Theo-
doric was free to establish his own political system.

He sought to consolidate his control through a dual system,
both of which ultimately rested on Roman rather than barbar-
ian traditions. He even took as his official title *Flavius Theo-
dericus rex.* He made no attempt to eliminate or replace the
system of Roman government under which the Roman popula-
tion of Italy continued to be governed. Instead, as Flavius Theo-
dericus, a member of the imperial family, he represented the
emperor, heading the government at the emperor's desire.

The barbarians to whom he owed his victory were not part of
this civilian Roman system. Although he had risen as king of the
Ostrogoths and had expressly affiliated himself with the ancient
Amal tradition, he made no attempt to rule as king of the Goths.
He ruled his barbarian followers, whether Ostrogoths or mem-
bers of other tribes that had followed him into Italy, as part of
a thoroughly military organization, the *exercitus Gothorum,* an
officially recognized Roman army that incorporated all men, re-
gardless of their origins, who participated in the army.

Within this dual system, both elements of which culminated in this thoroughly Roman Goth who became a barbarian member of the imperial family, the process of Ostrogothic ethnogenesis was complete. Theodoric's importance was not limited to the barbarians of Italy. As the most successful of the barbarian commanders, he dominated the peoples of the West in a loose confederation which included the Burgundians, Visigoths, and, to the north, the Alemanni and the Franks.

The Western Empire and the Franks

The ethnogenesis of the western barbarian peoples is less dramatic than that of the eastern but ultimately proved to be of more enduring importance. These peoples too were created in the great pan-Germanic turmoil of the Marcomannian wars, when the threat posed by neighboring warrior tribes forced the constitution of new confederations among the peoples along the Rhine. However, unlike the Goths, Burgundians, Lombards, and others who, although formed in the fourth century, carried names and traditions linking them with ancient peoples living in southern Scandinavia, the Franks, Alemanni, and Bavarii did not for the most part preserve ancient tribal traditions. Although the Alemanni generally called themselves Suebi (Sueves), these tribal confederations were not organized into stable *regna,* or kingdoms, prior to their entry into the Empire, nor did their internal affairs or even arrival within the *limes* impress their Roman contemporaries sufficiently to take much note of them. They arrived not as an invading army nor as federates. Instead, slowly and almost imperceptibly, small groups of their warrior-peasants crossed the Rhine to serve in the Roman military or to settle in the western provinces of the Empire.

Given the silence of contemporary writers on these peoples, our best source of information on the changes taking place within these Rhine-Weser Germanic communities is the ambiguous evidence of their burial practices. Sometime around the end of the third century, under circumstances related to the military transformations of which we have spoken above, first appeared new cultural attitudes toward the disposal of the dead. For example,

at the fourth-century cemetery of Lampertheim, east of Worms,
archaeologists have found fifty-six burials that indicate the be-
ginning of a transition from earlier Germanic practices. Here
one finds a profusion of burial types: cremation, burials in urns,
and uncremated burials. Twenty-nine of the burials were without
any grave articles; all but three of the remainder contained per-
sonal ornamentation and objects but no weapons. Three tombs,
however, were burials of armed men.[7]

In the course of the fourth century, the exception begins to be
the rule, both outside and within the *limes*—the dead are found
increasingly buried in cemeteries arranged in rows and oriented
east-west or north-south. While earlier Germanic burials within
the Empire had contained no weapons—Roman soldiers used gov-
ernment-issue arms, not personal property—increasingly the weap-
ons and jewelry within these tombs resembled that found in Free
Germany. Likewise, tombs in Free Germany began to contain
more provincial Roman products, such as belt decorations which
had probably been brought home by soldiers completing their
military service in the Empire. Such row-type burials even began
to appear in Roman provincial cemeteries and in close proximity
to Roman settlements. In fact, these new cemeteries apparently
began to appear first within or near the Roman *limes* and spread
out toward Free Germany. To judge from the archaeological evi-
dence, one might almost conclude that this new barbarian cus-
tom began within the Empire itself. In sum, the militarization of
the Roman Empire created a society of increasingly wealthy Ger-
manic warriors in northern and eastern Gaul who kept in close
contact with their relatives and friends outside the Empire and
in intimate social contact with the Gallo-Roman population.

So characteristic is this form of burial across most of northern
central Europe that it has given rise among modern German
scholars to a descriptive name for the entire barbarian West:
Reihengräberzivilisation ("row-grave civilization"). Although at
one time historians, who thought of the barbarian migrations as
actual movements of whole tribes, saw this burial transformation
as evidence of the arrival of "new" peoples from Scandinavia or
elsewhere, today scholars recognize this change as a reflection of
those occurring in the social, political, and cultural structures

of the peoples already living in western and central Europe. These changes were similar to those that had earlier transformed the Goths into a powerful and successful military machine.

The same pressures that created the Marcomannian wars also led to the formation, among the western Germanic peoples, of new, militarily organized confederations and peoples. As in the East, the demands of constant warfare resulted in the increasingly prominent role of military leaders (*duces* or *reiks*) and an increasing militarization of society. The new forms of burial indicate this progressive militarization, as warriors were buried with their weapons. Whether it was expected that these arms would be needed in a military afterlife or simply that as personal property the deceased retained rights to them after their deaths is unclear. What is clear is that, judging by the wealth of ornaments and magnificent weapons in these burials, the rewards for the groups which made a successful transformation to this new form of organization were great.

The "West Germanic Revolution" was so thorough that, unlike the Goths, Burgundians, and other eastern barbarians who transmitted an ancient name and thus a sense of identity across successive social formations, most of the West Germanic tribes appear not to have even had a clearly defined myth or origin; thus they later adopted those of other peoples. The Alemanni, for example, had no great historical tradition. Their name probably means simply "the people" (manni—"the people"; ala—an intensive prefix). Although they sometimes referred to themselves as Suebi, they were probably a confederation of small tribes that had long settled in the region east of the Rhine and south of the Main. A few sporadic raids across the Rhine and Danube in the late second through mid-fifth centuries, whose significance and force have probably been greatly exaggerated by modern historians, bore witness to the process of ethnogenesis taking place across the border.

Cautious archaeologists avoid giving ethnic names to their finds—bones carry no passports—but certainly the varieties of archaeological material are evidence of the genesis of several new peoples, including those who perhaps even then sometimes referred to themselves as the Franks.
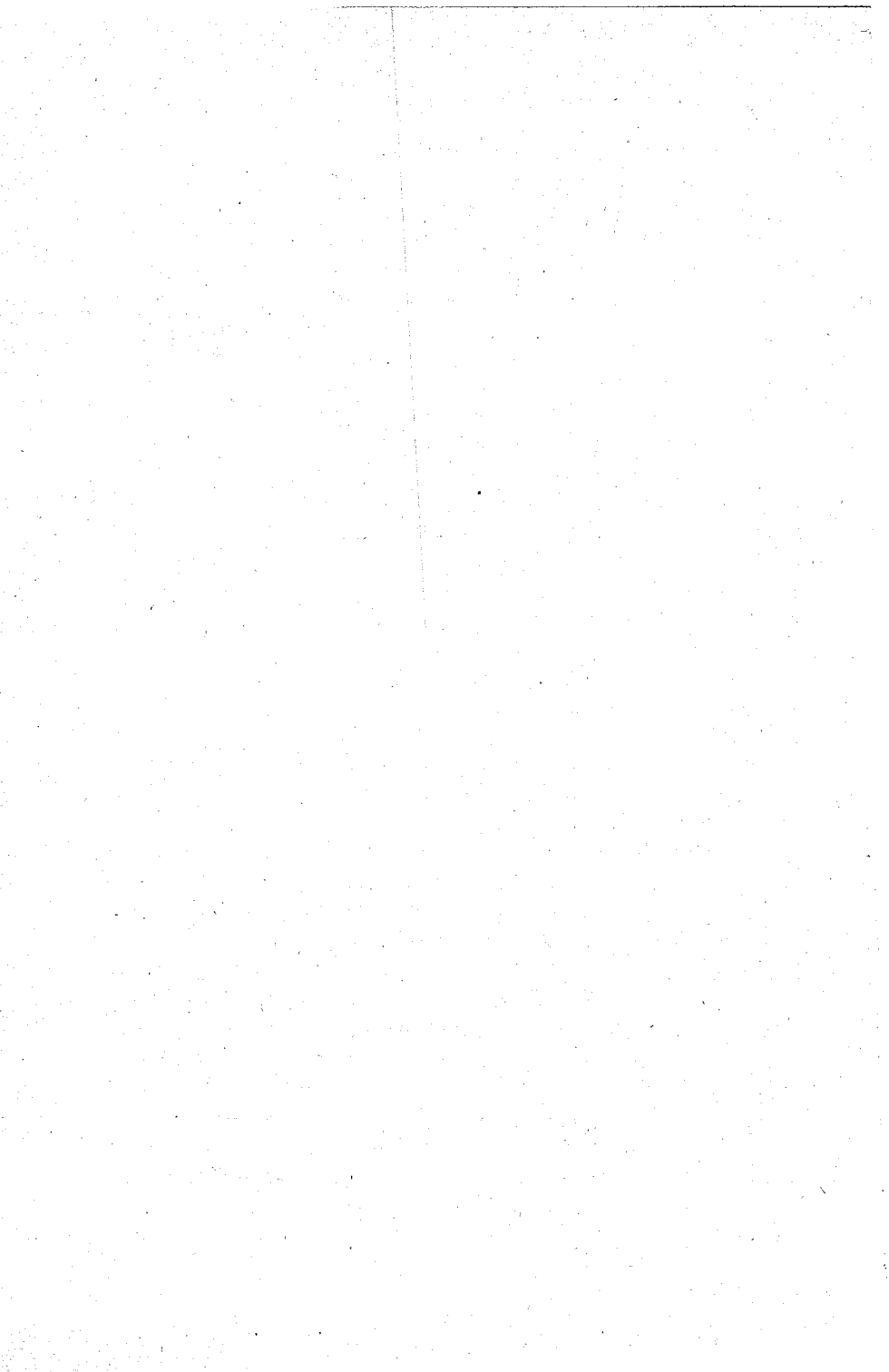
CHAPTER III

Romans and Franks
in the Kingdom of Clovis

> Many say that the Franks originally came from Pan-
> nonia and first inhabited the banks of the Rhine. Then
> they crossed the river, marched through Thuringia,
> and set up in each county district and each city long-
> haired kings chosen from their foremost and most
> noble family.[1]

> Blessed Jerome has written about the ancient kings of
> the Franks, whose story was first told by the poet Vir-
> gil: their first king was Priam and, after Troy was cap-
> tured by trickery, they departed. Afterwards they had
> as king Friga, then they split into two parts, the first
> going into Macedonia, the second group, which left
> Asia with Friga were called the Frigii, settled on the
> banks of the Danube and the Ocean Sea. Again split-
> ting into two groups, half of them entered Europe
> with their king Francio. After crossing Europe with
> their wives and children they occupied the banks of
> the Rhine and not far from the Rhine began to build
> the city of "Troy" (Colonia Triana-Xanten).[2]

These two versions of Frankish origins, the first written in the
late sixth century by Gregory of Tours, the second in the seventh
century by the Frankish chronicler Fredegar, are alike in betray-
ing both the fact that the Franks knew little about their back-
ground and that they may have felt some inferiority in compari-
son with other peoples of antiquity who possessed an ancient
name and glorious tradition. The first legend connects the Franks
with the great Pannonian plain, which was both the homeland of
the man who would become the chief religious patron of the
Franks, Martin of Tours, and the proximate place of origin of
the Goths—the great barbarian success story of the migration pe-

riod. The legend thus implies that the Franks are the equals of
the Goths in their origins and by implication in honor. The sec-
ond, later legend combines the origins of the Franks with that of
the Romans—equally ancient and from the same heroic city, the
Franks and Romans of Gaul could claim common ancestry as a
basis for the creation of a common society.

Frankish Ethnogenesis

Both legends are of course equally fabulous for, even more than
most barbarian peoples, the Franks possessed no common history,
ancestry, or tradition of a heroic age of migration. Like their
Alemannic neighbors, they were by the sixth century a fairly re-
cent creation, a coalition of Rhenish tribal groups who long
maintained separate identities and institutions. The name Frank
first appears in Roman sources of the mid-third century. It desig-
nated a variety of so-called Iistwaeoni tribes so loosely connected
that some scholars have denied altogether that they formed a
confederation, while others, although not wishing to deny cate-
gorically their unity, have referred to them as a "tribal swarm."
These groups included the Chamavi, Chattuari, Bructeri, Am-
sivarii, and Salii, and probably others such as the Usipii, Tubanti,
Hasi, and Chasuari. (The name Ripuarian is much later—it does
not appear before the eighth century. The name Sigambri, used
by Gregory of Tours and others, is probably just a classical remi-
niscence of the Sigambri of classical authors.) While maintaining
their separate identities, these small groups occasionally banded
together for common defensive or offensive operations and then
identified themselves by the name Frank, which meant "the
hardy," "the brave," and, only later, by extension, the mean-
ing favored by the Franks themselves, "the free."

   In reality, the early Franks were anything but free. Living in
close proximity to the Empire, relatively insignificant and di-
vided, these people prior to the sixth century were either subju-
gated as Roman client states or, within the *limes,* served as
largely faithful sources of military manpower and leadership.
Beginning in the later third century we hear of sporadic "Frank-
ish" raids and uprisings and even of "Frankish" pirates pene-

trating into the Mediterranean and raiding North Africa and the coast of Spain near Taragonna. However, in the reigns of Constantius Chlorus and Constantine they were brutally crushed, their leaders were thrown to wild beasts in the arena, and a great number of their warriors were incorporated into the imperial troops. Eventually, those known as the Salians were settled as *laeti* in the area known as Toxandria (Tiesterbant near modern Campine in the Netherlands) in order to return the area to cultivation, to provide a buffer zone between the more civilized regions of the Empire and other, as yet imperfectly subdued barbarian peoples, and finally to serve as a secure source of Frankish recruits for the imperial army.

This brutal treatment of the Franks was largely effective. Henceforth, although sporadic attempts might be made by anti-Roman factions to raid the Empire, the Franks provided loyal troops and leadership in the West for over a century. As we have seen, Franks such as Arbogast and Mallobaudes proved faithful officers of the Empire even against fellow Franks, and when in 406 the West faced the invasions of Vandals, Alans, and Sueves, the Franks proved faithful allies in attempting to repulse them.

During the long period of service to Rome, punctuated by short-lived rebellions or skirmishes, the Frankish identity and their political and military structure could not but be greatly influenced by contact with imperial traditions. Service in the military was long the primary means of Romanization, and the Frankish tribes of the middle and lower Rhine were more affected by this process than most. This deep penetration and transformation is clearly seen in such evidence as the third-century funerary inscription erected for a soldier in Pannonia: *Francus ego cives, miles romanus in armis* ("I am a Frank by nationality, but a Roman soldier under arms").[3] That a barbarian would employ the Roman term *civis* to describe his identity, a term incomprehensible without some sense of the tradition of Roman statecraft and law, indicates forcefully how much Frankish society was being molded into an integral part of the Empire. The second half of the inscription is equally indicative: a "Frankish citizen" was indeed a Roman soldier, for increasingly one found one's Frankish (as opposed to more narrow Chamavian,

Chattuarian, Bructerian, Amsivárian, or Salian) identity by serv-
ing in the Roman army.

Their service was well rewarded, and gradually in the fifth
century the Salians were able to spread out from their Toxan-
drian "reservation" into the more Romanized areas of what is
today Belgium and northern France as well as along the lower
Rhine, encroaching on the traditional territory of the Thurin-
gians. Most of this expansion was peaceful, although in 428 and
again in the 450s the Roman general Aetius had to crush Frank-
ish uprisings led by the Salic chieftain Chlodio. Such violent in-
terludes did not prevent close cooperation at other times, how-
ever, as in the Frankish support given Aetius in his defeat of the
Huns near Orléans in 451.

In the course of the fifth century the Salians came to dominate
the "tribal swarm" of Franks under the leadership of Chlodio's
kindred, which included Merovech (who was possibly but not
necessarily his son) and the latter's successor (and again possibly
his son) Childeric. However these Salic chieftains were related,
they were certainly part of the leading family of the Salians and
were distinguished, like other Germanic aristocratic families, by
the fashion of allowing their hair to grow long—the origin of the
later characterization of the family as "reges criniti" or long-
haired kings.

Childeric, one of several tribal leaders of the kindred of Chlodio,
began to lead the Franks prior to 463 and was the last Frankish
commander to continue the tradition of service as an "imperial
German." We know that he fought under the command of the
Gallic military commander Aegidius against the Visigoths at Or-
léans in 463 and again under the Roman commander or *comes*
Paul at Angers in 469. Although some sort of falling out resulted
in his departure from northern Gaul into exile in "Thuringia"
(it is uncertain whether this meant trans-Rhenian Thuringia or
simply Tournai), he remained intimately involved in the world
of late Roman civilization. Historians have even suggested, with
cause, that after his "exile" by the Roman commander of Gaul
he may have received direct subsidies from Constantinople. The
magnificent objects found in 1653 in his tomb in Tournai, the
center of his power, indicate the wealth and international hori-

zons of a successful federate in the late fifth century. The weapons, jewelry, and coins with which he had been buried at his death in 482 came from Byzantine, Hun, Germanic, and Gallo-Roman workshops. Service to Rome was still the surest means of achieving and expanding wealth and power.

However, the Roman world which he served was increasingly indistinguishable from his own. Aegidius himself had ended relations with Rome after the murder of the emperor Mariorian in 461 and was an opponent of the powerful Richomer. Geographically isolated by the territories of the Burgundians and Goths from the regions directly controlled by imperial armies, Aegidius commanded allegiance from his stronghold in Soissons less through any Roman office than through the power of his barbarian *bucellarii*, or personal army. Following his death in 464, his son Syagrius assumed his position, and the later report of Gregory of Tours that he had been elected *rex Romanorum,* "king of the Romans," a thoroughly barbarian title, probably accurately reflected his position. Whether or not Syagrius held some imperial title, possibly that of *patricius,* the real basis of his authority was that he had been raised to the position of *rex,* or military chieftain, of his barbarian army. Indeed, following the conclusion of peace between the emperor Julius Nepos and the Visigoths in 475, in which the former surrendered virtually all of Gaul to the latter, Syagrius may have been viewed as a renegade by the Empire. But he was not the only chief of a barbarian people north of the Loire. The tomb of Childeric contained a signet ring with the inscription *Childirici regis.*

The greatest power in the West was the Visigothic kingdom, and Childeric was too wise a commander to maintain an unambiguously hostile attitude toward it. That his sister was married to a Visigothic king is evidence that he had established positive relations with the heterodox but legitimate kingdom of Toulouse. However, like barbarian commanders in Roman service before him, Childeric maintained good relations with the Gallo-Roman society both in the kingdom of Soissons and, apparently, in the territories over which he ruled directly. Although a pagan (perhaps more in the Roman than in the Germanic tradition), he was seen as a protector of *Romanitas* and thus of the Ortho-

dox Christian church. In his frequent cooperation with Aegidius and Syagrius and his friendly relationship with Gallo-Roman bishops, he was clearly establishing his position not only with his Frankish warrior following but with indigenous Roman power structures as well. In all of this he lay the groundwork for the rise of his son Clovis (Chlodovic), who succeeded him in 482.

Clovis

Upon the death of Childeric the leadership of the Salian Franks passed to his son Clovis, who followed the policies of his father. A letter from the Gallo-Roman bishop Remigius of Reims written immediately after Childeric's death indicates that the young Frank was recognized by the Gallo-Roman leadership as the administrator of Belgica Secunda and that although a pagan, he was expected to serve the Christian Roman community:

> A great rumor has reached us that you have undertaken the command of Belgica Secunda. It is no surprise that you have begun just as your forefathers had always done . . . the bestowal of your favor must be pure and honest, you must honor your bishops and must always incline yourself to their advice. As soon as you are in agreement with them your territory [provincia] will prosper.[4]

This advice to a pagan chieftain to administer fairly and to seek out the advice of the bishops did not reflect any new state of affairs but described the tradition of imperial Germanic commanders in the service of the now Christian *Romanitas*. This Clovis apparently did for a few years, but the tendency of military leaders to expand their command combined with the death of the powerful Visigothic king Euric, which left a power vacuum in the West, led him to turn his attention to the kingdom of Syagrius, which probably included the Lyon provinces and portions of Belgica Secunda. In 486, with the cooperation of other Frankish chieftains, Clovis began a campaign against Syagrius, which was decided in one battle near Soissons. Syagrius was defeated and although he escaped, fleeing to the Visigothic king Alaric II, he was turned over to Clovis, who had him secretly killed.

Clovis's absorption of the kingdom of Soissons was, from one perspective, a coup d'état: the replacement of a barbarized Roman *rex* by a Romanized barbarian one. Clovis acquired intact what remained of Syagrius's *bucellarii*, Roman provincial administration, the notaries and agents of provincial government, as well as the fiscal lands previously controlled by Aegidius and Syagrius. Likewise, according to our principal source, Gregory of Tours, who wrote over two generations later, his position was recognized in some formal sense by the Gallo-Roman aristocracy. But Clovis's conquest had more far-reaching effects. Some Frankish groups had already been established within the kingdom of Soissons, possibly having remained after Childeric's exile. Indeed, Clovis's move against Syagrius may have been precipitated in part by the desire to reestablish control over these Franks. The conquest accelerated the movement of Frankish groups from north to south, and the heartland of Syagrius's kingdom rapidly became the center of Frankish power. This is most clearly seen in the disposition of Clovis's body upon his death. While his father had made his center of power the area of Tournai, where he was buried, in 511 Clovis was interred in Paris.

Clovis, an ambitious barbarian king consolidating his power in the early sixth century, had to come to terms with other power blocs in the West. First, he had to deal with the other Celtic, Germanic, and Frankish peoples on both sides of the Rhine, including the Armoricans, Thuringi, Alemanni, and Burgundians. Further afield was the Roman Empire, now limited to the East and a portion of central Italy, the Visigoths of Toulouse and Spain, and the Ostrogoths of Italy.

The chronology of Clovis's reign is hopelessly obscure; even the identity of the various peoples he is said to have defeated and absorbed into his kingdom is debatable. Apparently, he first fought the Armorican Celts to a stalemate, obtaining at best a very limited recognition of Frankish supremacy from that region later known as Brittany. According to Gregory, around 491 he conquered the Thuringi, presumably not those beyond the right bank of the Rhine, but a small group that, like the Franks, had drifted across the lower Rhine. In all likelihood, the conquest was a much more prolonged affair than Gregory would have one

believe, and warfare continued until at least 502 if not later. Clovis's third and most significant barbarian victory was over the Alemanni. The decisive victory against the Alemanni occurred at Tolbiac (modern Zülpich, north of Trier), apparently around 497. However, a significant number of the Alemanni escaped into the region of Rhaetia south of Lake Constance and the upper Rhine, where Theodoric the Ostrogoth took them under his protection. Having dealt with the Thuringi and Alemanni, Clovis then became involved in an indecisive campaign against the Burgundians around 500, a campaign ended through the intercession of Theodoric.

Clovis, like his father before him, cemented relationships with the Gothic kingdoms through marriage alliances. Clovis may even have adopted their religious beliefs. In spite of the claims of Gregory of Tours to the contrary (Gregory, writing two generations after the chieftain's death, created an image of Clovis that can hardly be reconciled with the fragmentary evidence we have of the historical Clovis), the British historian Ian Wood and the German Friedrich Prinz have suggested that Clovis flirted with or even converted to the Arianism (or quasi-Arianism) of his Gothic and Burgundian neighbors.[5] Such a suggestion makes abundant sense, particularly given the place of the Frankish ruler in the loose Ostrogothic confederation. Throughout his reign, Clovis maintained a respectful if not always accommodating attitude toward the great Ostrogothic king Theodoric, after whom his eldest son was named, and who not only protected Clovis's enemies such as the Alemanni, but also established a temporary truce between Clovis and the Visigothic king Alaric II.

Ultimately, however, Clovis determined to risk a decisive contest with the Goths, particularly in the region south of the Loire. Certainly this decision was related to his much discussed (and hopelessly obscure) conversion to Christianity, which took place at Reims on Christmas day in 496, 498, or possibly even as late as 506. From what Clovis was converted is not certain. To Gregory of Tours, it was from polytheism, specifically the Roman gods Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, and Mercury. This is not necessarily a case of *interpretatio Romana*. As we have seen,

barbarian Roman commanders had a long tradition of involvement in Roman state religion. Alternatively, or additionally, the conversion may have been from a syncretistic Frankish polytheism that probably included Celtic gods; a sea god that was part sea beast, part man, and part bull, which seems to have been a particular family deity for the Merovingians (as Clovis's descendants would be called after the name of his *Sippe* legendary ancestor Merovich), Woden; and Ingvi-Frey, after whom was named the second of Clovis's sons. Finally (additionally?), if the hypothesis of Wood and Prinz is correct, the conversion may have been from a politically expedient Arianism.

To what he was converted is equally problematic. Given the syncretistic nature of late antique religion, one need not suppose that his conversion to Christianity was a conversion to radical monotheism—Clovis may have viewed Christ as a powerful, victory-giving ally to enlist on his behalf. The account of his conversion as presented by Gregory certainly does not contradict this. According to Gregory, it was Clovis's orthodox Burgundian wife Clotild who first urged Clovis to embrace her religion. However, the decisive moment came, as it had two centuries earlier for another ambitious pagan commander, Constantine, in battle. Pressed by the Alemanni at Tolbac, he vowed baptism in return for victory. The parallel with Constantine, explicitly developed by Gregory, was unmistakable.

Whatever its nature, the conversion was hardly an individual affair. The religion of the Frankish king was an integral component of the identity and military success of a whole people, who drew their identity and cohesion from him. The conversion of the king necessarily meant the conversion of his followers. Small wonder, then, that Gregory tells that before his baptism Clovis consulted with his "people"—presumably his most important supporters. And small wonder that not only was he baptized but at the same time were baptized "more than three thousand of his army." However many Franks followed their king into the font, the conversion was clearly a military affair—the adoption by the commander and his army of a new and powerful victory-giver.

The conversion of Clovis to orthodox Christianity had ex-

tremely important internal and external consequences. The
victorious Franks were, like other Germanic peoples, primarily an
army which, though monopolizing military power, represented a
minority of the total population and largely lacked experience
in civil governance or other activities essential to the main-
tenance of a society. Now no cult barrier separated the army
from the indigenous inhabitants of Gaul—the peasants, artisans,
and most importantly the Gallo-Roman aristocracy and its lead-
ers, the bishops, for whom religion was as essential an element
of their identity as it was for the Franks. Christianization made
possible not only the close cooperation between Gallo-Romans
and Franks, such as had long been the norm in the Gothic
and Burgundian kingdoms, but a real amalgamation of the
two peoples, a process well under way at all levels in the sixth
century.

Externally, the conversion was a repudiation of the religious
traditions of the Franks' neighbors, the Burgundians and the
Goths, and presented an immediate threat to both kingdoms.
This was not so much because, as Gregory suggests, the orthodox
convert Clovis "found it hard to go on seeing these Arians oc-
cupying a part of Gaul."[6] Instead, as a ruler bent on expansion,
his orthodoxy increased the likelihood that the Gallo-Roman
aristocracies within these neighboring kingdoms would be in-
clined to collaborate with him. Thus the king's conversion was
a threat to the internal stability of his neighbors, and whatever
the actual chronology of the conversion, it must be understood
as part of the Frankish challenge to Gothic dominance and
Burgundian presence in the West.

The relative weakness of the Visigothic kingdom of Toulouse
following Euric's death no doubt encouraged Clovis to expand
to the south. In addition, as Syagrius's successor, Clovis now
shared an uncertain frontier with the Visigoths, a frontier that
in 498 he and his Franks had already crossed in a drive toward
Bordeaux. After this, his campaigns against the Alemanni and
Burgundians occupied him, but by 507 he was free to turn his
attention again to the Visigothic kingdom south of the Loire.
The campaign was well-coordinated; participating were both
some Burgundians and contingents led by his Rhenish kinsman

Chloderic, son of King Sigibert of Cologne. Clovis had made an alliance with Emperor Anastasius; the expedition was coordinated with Byzantine fleet movements off the Italian coast, which effectively prevented Theodoric the Ostrogoth from coming to the aid of the Visigoths. At Vouillé, northwest of Poitiers, the Goths were soundly defeated, Alaric II killed, and during the next year the Gothic capital of Toulouse was taken and the Gothic presence north of the Pyrenees reduced to a narrow stretch of coastline as far east as Narbonne.

On his victorious journey homewards, Clovis was met in Tours by emissaries from Emperor Anastasius who presented him with an official document recognizing him as an honorary consul. Clovis used this honor, which apparently included imperial recognition of Clovis's kingdom or at least the symbolic adoption of Clovis into the imperial family, to strengthen his authority over the newly-won Gallo-Romans. He appeared in the basilica of St. Martin of Tours dressed in a purple tunic and a chlamys, or military mantle, and placed a diadem on his head. None of this was part of consular tradition, but he probably wished to enhance his kingship by associating with the Roman imperial tradition. In a famous but ambiguous passage, Gregory says that "from this time forward he was acclaimed 'consul or augustus.' "[7]

Whatever the meaning of this ritual, Clovis soon turned to the practical affair of strengthening his position among the Franks. He had risen as the most successful chieftain of this decentralized confederation to a position of power unheard-of for a barbarian north of the Alps. Now he began eliminating other Frankish chieftains, his own kinsmen for the most part, in order to consolidate his power over the Franks as he had done over the Gallo-Romans. This he did with efficiency and brutality. Among others, he liquidated the family of King Sigibert, who ruled the Franks living along the Rhine near Cologne, he had the rival Salic chieftain Chararic executed along with his son, and he orchestrated the destruction of Ragnachar, a Frankish king at Cambrai. By the time of Gregory, Clovis's ruthless but clever maneuvers had become legend, and orally transmitted poems or songs about him were no doubt among Gregory's sources. Even through these legendary accounts transmitted by

a Gallo-Roman bishop, however, one can catch a glimpse of both the personality and the political acumen of Clovis. In each case he was careful to absorb not only his victim's treasure, but his *leudes,* or closest followers, as well. By the end of his reign, Gregory tells us, he was wont to complain "How sad a thing it is that I live among strangers like some solitary traveller, and that I have none of my own relations left to help me when disaster threatens!"[8] This comment was made, Gregory assures us, not because he grieved for them, but in the hope of finding some relative still alive whom he could kill.

Governing Francia: Legacies of Administration

The image most commonly held of Clovis's control over his vast conquests is a lordship established and maintained by personal charisma and fear. Gregory's descriptions of Clovis's elimination of his kinsmen and of his brutal retaliation for an affront made by a Frankish warrior who dared dispute his share of booty captured at Soissons reinforce this image of the barbarian conqueror, quick to lie and quicker to kill. Such qualities he may well have possessed, although they were not particularly barbarian—they can also characterize late Roman emperors. However these traits alone would hardly have made possible not only his conquests but the creation of a kingdom which, although weakened and divided upon his death, was visible enough to be passed on to his successors. The very heterogeneity of the lands and peoples he conquered provided multiple, complementary systems of political, social, and religious control on which to establish continuity and stability. Unlike most barbarian conquerors, including Attila and even Theodoric, Clovis's kingdom and his family endured for centuries.

The failure of Attila to establish a dynasty was hardly surprising. The rise and fall of such charismatic rulers was common enough in antiquity. The fate of Theodoric's Gothic kingdom deserves more consideration. His brilliant achievement suffered from two fatal weaknesses. First, he never attempted a synthesis of Roman and Gothic societies, thus bequeathing an unstable situation to his successors. Second and more fundamentally, Italy

was simply too close to Constantinople and the center of Roman interests to be allowed to go its own way.

Theodoric had attempted to preserve virtually intact two traditions, that of his orthodox Christian Roman population and that of the Arian Gothic army settled largely around Ravenna, Verona, and Pavia. The attraction of Roman tradition and culture was, however, too seductive for members of his own family, and after his death in 526 the next generation of Amals found themselves alienated from the more traditional Gothic aristocracy and bitterly divided among themselves. Ultimately Amalasuntha, the widow of Theodoric's son and regent for her minor son Athalaric (516–534), was driven to plan to secretly deliver Italy to Emperor Justinian. Her murder in 535 gave Justinian the opportunity to declare war on the Goths, and the ensuing twenty years of bloody conflict annihilated the Ostrogoths and left Italy prostrate.

In contrast to Theodoric's brilliant and doomed political structure in Italy, Clovis's kingdom from the beginning experienced a much more thorough mixture of Frankish and Roman traditions. Moreover, Gaul and Germany were simply too peripheral to Byzantine concerns to attract more than the cursory interest of Justinian and his successors. Thus the Franks were left to work out the implications of their successes in relative peace.

The charisma conveyed by the long hair and mythic origins of Clovis's ancestors, and his ability in convincing others that he was the only channel through which this charisma might be transmitted to future generations, may no doubt be credited with some of his success. Too much can be made of this, however. More important for the establishment of continuity and effectiveness in rule was the dual Roman heritage of both conquerors and conquered.

The indigenous population both of the north and especially of Aquitaine, the region south of the Loire that had been part of the Visigothic kingdom, had preserved the late Roman infrastructure virtually intact. Not only did Latin letters and language continue to be cultivated and vulgar Roman law continue to order people's lives, but Roman fiscal and agricultural structures, the network of Roman roads, towns, and commercial sys-

tems, although greatly privatized, had nevertheless survived without serious interruption. All of this was inherited by the Franks, along with the remains of the Roman bureaucracy that continued to operate them. After their victory, Clovis's Franks, accustomed to working closely with Romans, were in an ideal position to absorb them into the administration.

The Franks themselves were likewise deeply Romanized. Even prior to the victory at Soissons, Clovis and the Franks had been accustomed to the discipline of Rome. Generations of Roman service had taught the Franks much about Roman organization and control. This heritage is even visible in that supposedly most Frankish tradition, the Salic Law. Sometime between 508 and 511 Clovis issued what is known as the *Pactus Legis Salicae,* a capital and controversial text which we shall be mentioning often in our discussion of Frankish society. The *Pactus,* in its oldest extant form, consists of sixty-five chapters and is, after the Visigothic Law, the oldest example of a written code for a barbarian kingdom. Written law was certainly not a barbarian tradition; the very act of codifying traditional custom, in whatever haphazard manner, could only originate under the influence of Roman law and could have been done only by persons trained in that tradition. The text is in Latin, and scholars have long abandoned the hypothesis that the Latin was a translation of a now-lost Frankish version. Concepts of Roman law and Roman legal organization appear in the very form of the text. In issuing the text, Clovis was acting not as a barbarian king but as the legitimate ruler of a section of the Romanized world. Moreover, the *Pactus* applies not simply to Franks. It is intended for all the *barbari* in his realm.

- The bulk of the *Pactus* does not represent "new" legislation. Probably much of it was already antiquated at the time of its issue. With only minor exceptions, it is free of any Christian elements; it describes a society of simple peasants and herdsmen, not the victorious conquerors of Gaul; and some sections are less in the form of precepts than simple lists of fines and penalties and even traditional advice. The overwhelming thrust of the *Pactus* is to limit feuds or revenge on the part of family groups by establishing fines and penalties for offenses, an ancient con-

cern in Germanic society, according to Tacitus. Thus, while the codification itself as well as some parts of the *Pactus* are the result of Clovis's initiative, much of the text harks back to a much earlier period.

This does not mean, however, that one sees in this law pure Germanic custom. On the contrary, the older traditions may themselves be quite Roman. The primary evidence for this is the placenames mentioned in the *Pactus* and the earliest prologue attached to it. The prologue tells that because there were interminable quarrels among the Franks, four leading men who were commanders (*rectores*) came together and decreed the Salic Law.[9] This has usually been seen as a mythic origin account or perhaps a reference to otherwise unknown subkings from the time of Clovis. In a subsequent passage of the *Pactus,* it appears that the normal area of Frankish occupation is between the *Ligeris* river and the *Carbonaria* forest, although already the Franks had spread out beyond these boundaries. The majority of scholars today identify these landmarks as the Loire River and the Charbonnière forest between the Sambre and Dyle rivers in modern Belgium. They formed roughly the northern and southern boundaries of Clovis's kingdom, although some still argue that, the *Ligeris* is the Lys, which would have formed the northern boundary of Toxandria. Recently the French historian Jean-Pierre Poly has proposed as the meeting places of the four *rectores* the villages of Bodegem, Zelhem, and Videm between the Lys and the Charbonnière, which is still roughly within the old Toxandrian area. Further, he believes the four *rectores* represented four high-ranking "imperial German" officers of the fourth century, who, not by any Frankish right but by their Roman military authority over their troops, had the power to preserve the peace, quell violence, and negotiate blood payments from family elders to end feuds. Thus he would conclude that long before Clovis's conquest the Franks had incorporated notions of Roman authority into their legal and political structure. Clovis's legislative activity then drew upon this older tradition for his codification.[10]

The Franks of Clovis's time were accustomed to Roman traditions of law. They were equally accustomed, or soon made them-

selves so, to the use of Roman administration. As we have seen, even before his defeat of Syagrius, Clovis had been recognized by Bishop Remigius as a legitimate Roman governor, and after his victories over internal and external rivals, Roman and barbarian alike, his legitimacy had been acknowledged by the emperor. Thus the court of Clovis and his successors included not only the traditional officers of a Frankish aristocrat's household, here elevated to royal prominence—the king's *antrustiones,* or personal following, which enjoyed particular royal favor, headed by his *maior domus* or mayor of the palace, the constable, chamberlain, and the like—but Roman officers as well. Although no royal documents from Merovingian kings prior to 528 have survived, the form of later diplomas indicates that the kings had absorbed the secretaries *(scrinarii)* and chancellors *(referendarii)* of late Roman administration. Moreover, as in late Roman and Gothic administrations, this personnel was secular; the tradition of using clerics in the royal chancellery would be a Carolingian innovation.

The written word was vital in the administration of the Merovingian realm because the late Roman tax system, a fundamental aspect of royal power, continued to function, and accurate control of taxation meant reliance on paperwork. If little of it survives in contrast with later medieval administrative sources, the reasons are that it was written on fragile papyrus rather than on durable parchment, and being abundant and commonplace, less care was taken to preserve it beyond the time of its immediate usefulness. Nevertheless, we find references to a wider variety of written administrative instruments produced by the Frankish kings and their agents than would appear again before the twelfth century.

However we must not suppose that, because both Franks and Gallo-Romans were heirs of Roman traditions they were heirs of the same tradition. As we saw in the previous chapters, *Romanitas* had, for provincial Romans, virtually ceased to have anything to do with governance and certainly nothing with the military. By starving it financially, the Gallo-Roman aristocracy had long before managed to reduce provincial administration to a shadow and had privatized much of revenue collection, police

protection, and even justice. If the central administration of the early Frankish kings was primitive, it was no more or less than the administration Clovis inherited from Syagrius. For all of their love of Rome, the Gallo-Romans had long considered a strong central government a threat to their familial hegemony.

As long as provincial governors or barbarian kings allowed the Gallo-Roman elite autonomy, with control over their local dependents, these aristocrats were accustomed to providing assistance to the state. We have seen that Remigius had recognized Clovis's political legitimacy prior to his victory at Soissons and his conversion; similarly at the Synod of Agde in 506 Archbishop Caesarius of Arles had prayed on bended knee for the success, prosperity, and long life of the Arian Visigothic king Alaric. Rather than claiming the right to central government, this aristocracy was much more comfortable allowing the bishop, chosen by and of themselves, to direct what remained of the public sphere, the *res publicae*, at the local level of the *civitas*, which included the city and its immediate territory. Thus Remigius's plea to Clovis to follow his bishops' advice is no more than a plea for him to follow the advice of the Roman aristocracy. Power over the people was held by the great landowners, who were the real authority. Thus their sense of belonging to a wider world of Rome was much more a function of classical culture, particularly rhetoric, and of orthodox religion than of imperial administration.

If the cultural legacy of Rome was claimed as a monopoly by the aristocracy, it was the military that belonged to the Franks, as it had to generations of imperial Germans before them. As deeply Romanized as Franks were in terms of military discipline and participation in the power politics of the Western Empire, they were, except for a small elite, as untouched by Roman social and cultural traditions as the Gallo-Roman aristocracy was by Roman military tradition. The unique achievement of Clovis and his successors was that, through his conquest and conversion, he was able to begin to reunite these two splintered halves of the Roman heritage. The process was a long one and not without difficulty, but in time it created a new world.

In the early sixth century, the duality of the heritage was most

clearly in evidence in local administration. Our sources are ex-
traordinarily meager, but apparently Gallo-Roman bishops con-
tinued to represent their communities, and the remains of local
judicial and fiscal administration were left intact. The primary
change was that a *comes* or count, personally connected to the
king and thus in some sense Frankish, was assigned along with
perhaps a small garrison to major towns. His responsibilities
were largely military and judicial. He raised the levy from the
area and enforced royal law as it applied to Franks when he
could. Without the cooperation of the bishop and other Gallo-
Romans he could accomplish little, but this cooperation was
usually forthcoming provided he did not attempt to increase
the burden of taxation or interfere in the sphere of influence
created by the local elites. In fact, he often seems to have mar-
ried into these elites, particularly in remote areas of the king-
dom where Franks were few. We shall see more of this process
in subsequent chapters.

At the top of the political spectrum, the dual heritage was
seen in a decision that had far-reaching implications for Francia:
the division of Clovis's kingdom upon his death in 511.[11] No
one really knows why it was divided among his four sons, al-
though there is no lack of hypotheses: perhaps it was part of a
wider tradition of Germanic societies, which can be found among
the Burgundians, Goths, Vandals, and Anglo-Saxons, all of whom
knew multiple kings without necessarily multiple kingdoms; per-
haps this was demanded by Salic Law; perhaps it was because of
the almost magical force of Merovingian blood. More likely, the
division was the result of the peculiar dual nature of Clovis's
kingship. He had managed to make himself the sole commander
of the Franks and, while he was probably not as successful in
exterminating his relatives as Gregory suggests, there were no
close claimants for succession other than his sons by two wives.
To judge by other Germanic traditions this might have been
dealt with in a variety of ways. The elder son Theuderic could
have inherited his father's kingdom in its entirety. Alternatively,
his half brothers by Queen Chrodechildis could have each ob-
tained a position as subking while Theuderic became king of
a united Francia. As Ian Wood has suggested however, given

the age disparity separating him from the others, there would have been a great possibility that the younger sons would have in time lost their positions and their lives to him. In any event, this possibility seems to have been exactly what Clovis, through his systematic elimination of kinsmen, was attempting to end.

The solution of dividing the kingdom among his four sons seems less a Frankish than a Roman one. Clovis's territories were divided along roughly Roman political boundaries, and each brother was established with his own court and (no doubt Roman) advisors centered in a major city. The divisions reflect less the Roman imperial tradition than the particularist traditions of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy; they did not respect the integrity of Roman provinces but rather that of the smaller Roman *civitates,* which had become the focal points of Gallo-Roman interest. Thus Theuderic, whose court was in Reims, received in addition the areas centered on Trier, Mainz, Cologne, Basel, and Châlons, as well as the recently subdued lands on the right bank of the Rhine. Chlothar received the old Salic heartlands between the Charbonnière forest and the Somme River along with Noyon, Soissons, his capital, and Laon. Childebert's portion included the coastal regions from the Somme to Brittany, probably including, along with Paris, his capital, Amiens, Beauvais, Rouen, Meaux, Le Mans, and Rennes. The last brother, Chlodomer, reigned from Orléans over Tours, Sens, and probably Troyes, Auxerre, Chartres, Angers, and Nantes.

Just how these portions were determined is unknown. Certainly they must have been devised by Romans with a knowledge of fiscal receipts from each region as well as an eye to maintaining the integrity of their own power bases. Even in this most central question of the fate of the Frankish kingdom, it is most likely that decisions were made by Franks and Romans working in close harmony.

The Peoples of Francia

The population of Clovis's kingdom was complex and heterogeneous in its social, cultural, and economic traditions. Not only were the Franks and Gallo-Romans different from each other

culturally, but neither of these populations was itself homoge-
neous.

THE ECONOMY OF COUNTRYSIDE AND CITY

The Roman society had continued to develop into the region-
ally fragmented and socially stratified world that we examined
in Chapter I. This society was deeply rooted in the nature of its
economic system, which was characterized by the monopoly of
landowning in the hands of a small, extraordinarily wealthy
elite, with the vast majority of the population, slave and free
alike, destitute and often in desperate straits. The result was an
agriculture woefully inadequate to the support of the popula-
tion and a commercial and artisanal infrastructure catering al-
most exclusively to the elite.

This agricultural system, which characterized the early medi-
eval economy for centuries, resulted in little surplus production
in good years and frequent and often catastrophic famines in
bad. Occasionally the fragility of this economic base has been
blamed on the arrival of the barbarians, who in fact had little
effect on either landholding or agricultural techniques. The con-
tinuity with late Roman field division, agricultural techniques,
and manorial organization, when they had survived to the sixth
century, was enormous. This was less the case in the Rhenish re-
gions but was common elsewhere, both in the north of the Frank-
ish kingdom and especially in the south. More disruptive than
barbarians had been the general decline in population and flight
from marginal or overtaxed lands beginning in the third century.
The lack of sufficient agricultural labor continued to be a major
problem, and the steps that had been taken since Diocletian had,
if anything, probably exacerbated the situation. In 517 the coun-
cil of Yenne forbad abbots to enfranchise slaves from the estates
received from laymen because "It is unjust that slaves should en-
joy liberty while monks work the land day and night."[12] Well
into the ninth century, kings, aristocrats, and churchmen were
engaged in bringing abandoned and uninhabited lands into pro-
duction.

The cultivation of the land relied on the techniques of provin-

cial Rome, but they were, if anything, even more labor-intensive than previously. Machinery such as the mechanical harvester used in Gaul in the time of Pliny had disappeared; water mills, although in use along the Rhône and Ruiver, as well as in a few other areas, were rare; and the other tools, ploughs, scythes, hoes, etc., were largely or even entirely of wood. Iron was a rare and precious commodity. So important was it that appeals were commonly made to local saints to find lost iron objects, and when they did so, the fortunate event was likely to be recorded among the saint's miracles. Carefully guarded, sparingly used, iron tools were employed primarily to make wooden ones.

Cereal production, which within the Roman world had consisted primarily of wheat, came to be dominated increasingly by darker grains such as barley, known to the Germanic peoples. This change reflected in part a change of taste from the traditional Mediterranean to a more northern one, but was also due to practical survival and efficiency. Dark grains were not only more hardy, but because they could be readily converted into a strong and nourishing beer, they could be conserved longer than the more delicate wheat.

One area of agriculture that actually expanded in the early Merovingian period was viniculture. Rome had introduced vines wherever it had come, but they were cultivated in the more northern areas of Europe only with the expansion of ecclesiastical institutions in these areas. Wine was not only essential for eucharistic liturgy, it was the drink of the elite. The increasing investment in wine cultivation at the expense of traditional subsistence-type agriculture probably indicates the growing dominance of agricultural decisions by the aristocracy.

The prehistoric concern of the Germanic peoples with cattle herding continued and expanded with the Frankish kingdom. Throughout the Salic Law and other early law codes, cattle figure prominently, and the detail with which cattle raising is treated reinforces the overall impression that these animals continued, as in the age of Stelus, to form the foundation of barbarian wealth and prestige.

Although the vast majority of the population still lived on the land, the cities of Francia played an important role in the king-

dom, both as residences of bishops, counts, and kings and as cen-
ters of economic activity. The actual population of these cities is
extremely difficult to determine. The only evidence comes from
archaeology, and since it is largely based on the area included
within the third-century city walls, there is abundant room for
speculation about the size of the population residing in subur-
ban quarters. Thus some historians have speculated that in the
sixth century Paris might have had a population of 20,000 in-
habitants and Bordeaux 15,000, while others have argued that
these estimates should be reduced by almost 50 percent. What is
certain is that the social, cultural, and political significance of
these cities was far greater than what one might expect from
their small populations.

Most of the Roman aristocracy had long before abandoned the
cities for the security and autonomy of their vast country estates,
but some had returned, and in the poetry of Sidonius Apolli-
naris and the lives of early saints we read of the presence of rich
and powerful Romans living not only in the cities of Aquitaine
and Gaul, but even in Trier, Metz, and Cologne. The most im-
portant Gallo-Roman residents were, however, the bishops. They
and their clergy maintained much of the public life of the cities,
undertaking the traditional civic obligations of poor relief and
the maintenance of walls, aqueducts, and the like. So important
were they that ancient cities which did not become the sees of
bishops tended by and large to disappear in the early Middle
Ages. The presence of an episcopal court made the difference be-
tween life and death for an urban center.

Although one hears much less about them than about the
bishop and clergy in our sources, another important resident of
the cities was the Frankish king or his representative, the count,
and his military garrison. Frankish elites, like their Gothic and
Burgundian counterparts, were attracted to Roman cities where
they could both enjoy the good life they and their ancestors had
long desired and find the safety in numbers that their political
position and social rank demanded. Unlike the later Merovin-
gians and certainly unlike the Carolingians, the early Merovin-
gians and their representatives resided in cities, where they re-
ceived and spent the revenues of estates they had acquired, thus

contributing to a continuing mercantile and craft economy which flourished through the seventh century. While it is certainly true that the bishops and their clerics formed the central nucleus of urban continuity and that their building programs gradually came to dominate the physical space of the city with their cathedral groups, baptisteries, hospices, and, outside the walls, basilicas and cemeteries, one must not forget the effects on city life of a Theudebert, who had games held once more in the amphitheater of Arles, or of a Chilperic I, who built circuses in both Paris and Soissons.

The sixth-century city was more than the residence of the bishop and the Frankish count or king. It continued to play a vital commercial role as well. In spite of barbarian pillage and Gallo-Roman internal strife, in spite of depopulation and the archaization of Western society, the network of Roman roads and, more importantly, of commercial waterways continued to function. The nature of this circulation was, however, quite different from what had been the norm in previous centuries or was seen in the later Middle Ages when urban growth was accompanied by a resurgence of commercial activity. In order to understand the peculiar nature of commerce in the Merovingian world we must first understand the circulation of goods in general in sixth-century Francia.

Much ink has been spilled in the debate over the relative vitality of the Western economy in the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries. On the one hand, numismatic evidence indicates the continued importance of gold coinage into the seventh century, and both archival and narrative sources mention merchants, import goods, and a functioning customs and tariff collection well into the eighth century. On the other hand, it often appears that precious metal was more important for display than for use as an exchange medium and that the primary means of circulation of goods and prestige objects was not commerce but military expeditions and local plundering, or else the exchange of gifts. Thus from one perspective the commercial world of late antiquity appears intact and perhaps even expanding in the north; Syrian, Greek, and Jewish merchants travel the length and breadth of Francia, sometimes in camel caravans, selling their wares, and

local grain merchants buy and sell in flourishing markets. From
the other, one sees an archaic society in which warfare and gift
exchange characterize the modalities of circulation and in which
gold is more prized for jewelry, for church ornamentation, or for
horse trappings than for its exchange value. The confusion is the
result of the complex nature of the Merovingian economy in
which circulation mechanisms were intimately connected to so-
cial relationships. With different people, at different times, all of
these mechanisms operated, and each played a vital role in the
distribution of local, regional, and international goods and ser-
vices.

The overwhelming majority of foodstuff were made available
for local consumption either by the peasants who produced it or
by their lords. The small surplus not consumed or lost to spoil-
age circulated by sale, gift, or theft, depending on the social and
political relationships between the exchange partners. The sec-
ond two were more significant than the first. Great aristocrats,
whether Frankish or Roman, supported their followers and the
members of their households by supplying them with food, cloth-
ing, arms, and other necessities of their livelihood and social
rank. Bishops distributed alms to the poor inscribed in the mu-
nicipal poor rolls as a continuation of the traditional obligation
of imperial largesse and in order to maintain the support of the
populace. Friendship was sealed by the exchange of gifts. This
network of gifts and countergifts probably accounted for much
of the equalization and distribution of agricultural surplus.

Between enemies, that is, any persons not bound by a mutual
relationship of friendship, goods circulated by plunder and theft.
This could mean warfare or simply periodic raids on enemies'
goods and chattels as part of continuing feuds. Also, kings and
their representatives received, in addition to taxes, gifts of live-
stock, wine, wax, and other products, which were essentially
tribute.

Both of these sorts of transactions could and did take place
within the city as well as the countryside. However, it was in the
city that the less normal but still significant form of goods ex-
change between neutral parties took place—sale. One hears of the
sale of foodstuffs primarily during times of crisis when those who

had stockpiled them could realize enormous profits, although regular markets certainly existed. The more important types of commercial transactions were in commodities not everywhere available, relatively easy to carry, and in great demand. The most basic of these was salt, which was produced in low-lying coastal regions by evaporation and then transported inland. Also important were wine, oil, fish, and grain.

Products of artisanal workshops also circulated regionally and even over great distances, although the mechanisms of this circulation is uncertain. In the south, traditional Mediterranean pottery of late classical design continued to be produced into the eighth century; glass produced in the Ardennes and around Cologne found its way as far north as Frisia and even Sweden; Frankish weapons, which enjoyed a great reputation across Europe, have been found throughout Francia and in Frisia and Scandinavia. Textiles also circulated between regions: Provence was particularly known for its inexpensive cloth as far away as Rome, Monte Cassino, and Spain.

As reduced in size as the population of Frankish cities was, a diverse population of merchants continued to exist. Gregory of Tours mentions that the bishop of Verdun, Desideratus, obtained a loan from King Theudebert of 7,000 gold pieces guaranteed by the merchants of his city, who presumably specialized in foodstuffs. However, the story told by Gregory demonstrates the parallel existence of a gift-based circulation of wealth and commerce: Theudebert granted the loan as a favor to Desideratus to show his generosity. According to Gregory the loan enriched "those practicing commerce,"[13] and the bishop was able to attempt to repay the loan with interest. The king refused repayment, saying that he had no need of it. That enough merchants existed in the city to repay such a loan indicates that commerce was not insignificant; that their repayment was later dismissed by the king out of generosity indicates that the system of commercial credit was alien to him—he preferred to have the city in his political debt. For a Merovingian king, gold was not primarily a form of money with which to make more money by clever investment; it was a means of manifesting his generosity and of cementing the bonds with his people.

In addition to urban merchants, the owners of great estates, both lay and ecclesiastic, had their own agents, sometimes Jews, in other instances members of their own households, either serf or freedmen, who were responsible for the sale of their surplus and the purchase of necessities not produced locally. Again, however, these agents operated not only in a commercial mode; the same individuals might be charged with the delivery of gifts to other magnates and with the reception of reciprocated gifts. One can suppose that much of the circulation in which they were involved was neither sale nor, strictly speaking, barter, but the delivery of goods that cemented relationships among the elite.

Finally, in every important city was a community of foreigners engaged in supplying luxury goods to the aristocracy. This long-distance commerce was largely in the hands of Greeks, Syrians, and Jews, who are found in Arles, Marseille, Narbonne, Lyon, Orléans, Bordeaux, Bourges, Paris, and elsewhere. They provided a supply of jewelry, precious cloths, ornaments, as well as papyrus, spices, and the like. These merchants could form considerable communities in Frankish cities with their own judicial officers or "consuls" and perhaps even took an active role in the wider community. Gregory of Tours mentions that a Syrian merchant, Eusebius, bribed his way into the position of bishop of Paris and, dismissing the household of his predecessor, replaced them with other Syrians.[14] Clearly international merchants wielded considerable power.

They acquired this power because they could provide the aristocracy with the magnificent luxury goods they needed to make manifest their social positions. The merchants were also important because import duties and tariffs collected from them were a major source of liquid revenue for the Merovingians. Particularly in Provence, where the bulk of Mediterranean imports arrived, royal customs officers collected considerable sums which went to the royal coffers. The division of Provence among the subkingdoms of Francia probably involved as much a division of important customs dues as a division of land.

In return, the West had little to offer these international merchants but gold. This was nothing new. Gaul had never been a major exporter of anything but timber and, occasionally, of slaves. To this the Franks could add weapons. However the exportation

of slaves was, in theory at least, forbidden—labor was scarce and the Franks themselves imported slaves from the Slavic regions— although it certainly did go on via the Rhône. Likewise, Frankish arms were a dangerous export item since they could be turned against them by other purchasers. Thus the East–West commerce was largely one-way. Gold that had been acquired as booty or subsidies from the Eastern Empire flowed back again in payment for luxury goods. As the amount of booty decreased in the later sixth, seventh, and early eighth centuries, commerce decreased with it. This gold drain, which temporarily ended only with renewed Frankish conquests under the Carolingians, ultimately reduced international trade to a trickle. And, as trade disappeared, so did the international communities of merchants which added color, sophistication, and excitement to the cities of Francia.

FRANKISH SOCIETY

Franks had been settling heavily in Gaul long before Clovis, probably in fact before they were Franks. As we have seen, the conquest of Syagrius's kingdom may have been as much a response to this situation as a precipitator of it. Some Franks gradually moved, a few families at a time and a few kilometers at a time, into the Roman world. But some peoples living in the Roman world, whether *laeti* or federates, gradually turned into Franks. Given the paucity of written evidence, it is extremely difficult to determine just how those regions of northern Europe became "Frankish." Our best evidence lies in the cemeteries arranged in rows about which we spoke in Chapter Two. In the late fifth century these cemeteries show an important change. Prior to that time row cemeteries within the Empire had been generally poor in grave goods. Now, increasingly one began to bury the dead with more weapons or jewelry, indicating the great wealth that came with military service and increased raiding. Moreover, to judge from the great differences in the quality and variety of grave goods found in these late fifth-century tombs, military service, either to Childeric and Clovis or to the various competing Gallo-Roman commanders, or even independent raiding could result in real wealth for leaders of warrior bands.

A significant example of the archaeological evidence left by

these late fifth-century migrants and their successors is the ceme-
tery at Lavoye (Meuse), excavated at the beginning of this cen-
tury. The findings, analyzed scientifically, were published by René
Joffroy a little over a decade ago.[15] The cemetery, established on
an early Gallo-Roman site (probably a rustic *villa*) contains 362
tombs, of which 192 can be dated from the late fifth or early
sixth century until the second half of the seventh century, after
which time the disappearance of grave goods makes dating im-
possible. The tombs are arranged in rows and oriented north-
south. The cemetery seems to have grown up around a group of
nine tombs that probably form the family burial group of an
important Frankish chieftain. The central tomb (number 319),
that of the chief himself, is the oldest, largest, deepest, and rich-
est of the group and contains the remains of a man between fifty
and sixty years old. Buried with him are weapons and objects of
extraordinary value and beauty, including a golden cloisonné
belt buckle decorated with garnets; a purse with a similarly dec-
orated clasp; a dagger with a handle of gold; a magnificent long
sword almost a meter in length decorated with gold, silver, and
garnets; three javelin heads; a shield; and, at his feet, a glass
bowl and a Christian liturgical pitcher covered in bronze and
decorated with scenes from the life of Christ, which was probably
pillaged from a Christian church. These objects are similar to
others found across a wide region of northern France and Ger-
many both within and beyond the former Roman *limes* and
show not only the martial character of his identity and wealth,
but also the wide cultural zone to which the chieftain belonged.

The nearby tombs that also date from the early sixth century
were probably for members of his family. Of the five closest to
the chieftain's, three are of women, also richly furnished with
jewelry, vessels, and spinning weights. These may have been his
wives; like the Germans of Tacitus's day the Franks of the sixth
century practiced resource polygyny, and certainly this chief could
have afforded several wives. The two remaining tombs are of
small children, evidence of the infant mortality that plagued Eu-
ropean society well into the nineteenth century.

North, east, and west of this burial group spread the other
tombs of the Frankish community. Some have similar but poorer

grave articles; most are without any furnishings at all. This community, living on the site of a previous Roman villa and possibly incorporating into it the descendants of the local Gallo-Roman inhabitants, will be our base as we examine the structure and organization of Frankish society in the sixth century.

HOUSEHOLDS

The burials at Lavoye tend, like those surrounding the chieftain, to be grouped together, probably indicating kin groupings. What exactly these were in the sixth century is difficult to determine. Frankish society continued the organization of the migration period, and although the large kindred groups or *Sippe* continued to be important to the aristocracy, they were probably less important to ordinary Franks than individual households and villages.

Roman and Germanic traditions of patriarchal family structure differed little, and the two fused rapidly and easily in terms of control over the household. The father was the head of the household and exercised his authority, *mundiburdium,* over all of its members—wives, children, and slaves. The wealthier the man, the larger the household. Merovingian kings before and after Clovis's conversion frequently had several wives, and important chieftains such as the one buried at Lavoye no doubt did also. Well into the ninth century, Frankish and other Germanic societies had a variety of marriages. The most formal type involved transfer of property and of *mundiburdium* over the woman. Women were highly valued in Frankish society, primarily because of their value in bearing children. According to Salic Law the wergeld of a woman of childbearing age was three times that of an ordinary man or a woman under twelve or over forty.

Thus the transfer of a woman from one man to another demanded compensation. This was originally in the form of a bride-price, but by the sixth century it was becoming a ritual payment. The more important gift was the reverse dowry the groom gave to the bride, which in Frankish custom amounted to one-third of the groom's property. After the marriage had

been consummated, the husband traditionally gave his wife an-
other gift, the *Morgengabe.* Finally, it was normal for the father
of the bride to give the couple a gift after the marriage.

The negotiations leading to marriage were carried out be-
tween the heads of the households and, in important families,
sealed with a formal written contract. The wedding itself was
publicly celebrated and marked the formation or reaffirmation
of an alliance between the two households.

A second, less formal kind of marriage, which required no
transfer of authority or dowry, was also common. This was the
Friedelehe, a union effected privately between husband and wife.
Such unions were a threat to the authority of the heads of house-
holds and to the Church, which was increasingly concerned
about the legitimacy of children and the enforceability of mar-
riage contracts. However, such unions were publicly recognized,
even if frowned upon by many. Often the marriage was arranged
as a kind of bride theft; the man would abduct the woman, fre-
quently with her consent and agreement. After the marriage had
been consummated, the family of the woman had to choose
among seeking vengeance, reparation for the rape of their daugh-
ter, or accepting her abductor as her husband.

In addition, Franks often had concubines, either between or
along with marriages. Such arrangements were considered nor-
mal well into the eighth century, although from time to time
churchmen raised objections to them, and their children posed
a potential threat to the claims of the legitimate children for
their inheritance.

Like kinship, inheritance was bilateral in Frankish society,
although daughters were excluded from some forms of real prop-
erty inheritance. This is stated in the famous chapter of the
Pactus Legis Salicae, resurrected in the fourteenth century by
French jurists eager to avoid seeing the French crown pass to
the king of England, which excluded women from inheritance
of "Salic" land. However, no one is quite sure what Salic land
was, and by the second half of the sixth century Chilperic II
specifically allowed daughters to inherit Salic land in the absence
of brothers. Women certainly did participate in inheritance of
movables, and upon the death of a husband a wife might well

inherit all of his property, which she could then control without male authority.

Besides one's wife or wives, the household included the underage children, legitimate and illegitimate. Scholars have suggested that the practice of polygyny and concubinage probably concentrated the number of women in the households of the magnates, leaving fewer for marriage with the rest of the population and, as a result, fewer children. This may be so, but it is also clear that when resources were scarce, Franks, like other peasant societies before and after them, occasionally practiced infanticide or child selling. Entirely too much has been made of this in recent literature, however. There is no evidence that infanticide was a normal practice or that female infanticide in particular was deeply ingrained in the popular culture of Francia.

In addition to one's kin, the household also included a wide variety of servants, slaves, and retainers. In fact, to judge from later peasant communities, the position of householder was an elite one, requiring a sufficient economic base in land and chattels to establish a house and thus to marry. Many, if not most, people probably lived as members of other households, whether they were of kings, wealthy magnates, or simply more prosperous peasants. These included household slaves (unlike Romans, Franks did not normally employ gangs of slave laborers unless they were wealthy and had been thoroughly Romanized), unmarried relatives, abandoned children of less prosperous neighbors absorbed and raised as servants, and hired hands lacking the wherewithal to establish their own households. The size of such households could thus vary enormously from just the nuclear family to dozens of retainers in the service of great men or women.

THE VILLAGE

The normal form of agricultural exploitation established by Romans in Gaul, as elsewhere in the Empire, was the villa, that is, the isolated estate of varying size (80 to 180 square meters for small ones to over 300 square meters for large ones). Within the walls of the villa were found the house of the owner and

the habitations of his slaves, who provided the labor on the estate. In the course of the third and fourth centuries most of the isolated northern villas were abandoned in favor of more concentrated areas of habitation, often near forests or waterways. This was done possibly as a security measure in uncertain times. These new communities were distinguished from the older *villae* not only by the relative concentration of population but also by the insubstantiality of their buildings, which were lightly constructed wooden dwellings irregularly grouped. In the course of the fifth and sixth centuries, these new concentrated centers began to develop into the villages of the Middle Ages.

In western Germany the same period saw equally important changes. Much of Germany experienced a drop in inhabited sites in late antiquity. Then, beginning in the early fifth century, the Romanized areas of Germany began to experience considerable growth of new habitations. Around Trier, twenty new sites appeared between 450 and 525, twenty-eight between 525 and 600, and sixty-seven between 600 and 700. Around Cologne, a similar growth took place; the number of inhabited sites grew from around twenty-eight in the sixth century to sixty-seven in the seventh. At the same time, the more northern and eastern regions were undergoing a decline of populated sites that did not end until the eighth century.[16]

The communities thus created during the fourth through sixth centuries formed the physical space within which northern Europe's population would live for three centuries, until the great changes of the Carolingian period. Through the Merovingian centuries, they played important social and cultural roles in the society of Francia.

While peasants and herdsmen might travel a considerable distance to their fields, the village itself was the center of religious and social life. The original impetus for the establishment of concentrated villages in particular places was often the presence of a cult center. In pagan times this meant perhaps a rural temple; later it could be a chapel or hermitage. Merovingian religion was intensely individual and local, focusing on reverence for individuals who had, during their lifetimes, been defenders and patrons of their commmunities and who, after death, could

continue, as the favored companions of God, to look after their communities. This intimate tie between the living and dead also extended to the local cemetery. At Flonheim in Germany, for example, the central tombs (corresponding to the chieftain's tomb in Lavoye) dating from the pre-Christian period subsequently had a chapel built over them, which then formed the center of this growing Christian necropolis. Far from forgetting their pagan ancestors, the local population had Christianized them ex post facto.[17] The physical continuity of the community with the habitation of the dead gave permanence and stability to the village.

The village was also the level above the household at which the social and political life of the people was organized. The most immediate rung of justice was provided at the village level. The Roman judge or Frankish count might appear there or send his representative to deal with local disputes involving free men of the area. More frequently, the heads of households and *Sippe* met to resolve conflicts and settle scores without recourse to public justice.

Finally, once established the village became an important fiscal unit in the Roman and then Frankish administration. Fixed dues to landlords and taxes owed the fisc established a continuity. Villages became units of income and sources of manpower for aristocrats and kings.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Was the man buried in tomb 319 at Lavoye a noble? This question has been at the center of an unending debate in European history for over a century. As traditionally posed, the issue is whether the Franks of the sixth century had a nobility independent of the king, or whether Clovis eliminated any original Frankish nobility in the same manner that he did his kinsmen. At the heart of this debate is the question of the origins of European nobility and its relationship to the monarchy. Did European nobility, as it emerged in the later Middle Ages, derive from control of landed wealth and the nonfree persons who

worked the land (German: *Grundherrschaft*), or did it derive
from military and political power over free men (German: *Volks-
herrschaft*), and if from the latter, did the nobility achieve this
power through usurpation of royal authority or from earlier in-
herited right? The whole issue is perhaps the classic example of
asking the wrong question and then being unable to find the
right answer, but the issues raised, when clarified, do illuminate
important characteristics of Frankish society.

Clearly, the Gallo-Roman aristocracy comprised an indepen-
dent, self-perpetuating elite whose social status and political
power was based on their ancestry, inherited wealth, and special
status under law *(viri inlustri)*. While they often did cooperate
with kings, they were not created by them. An earlier generation
of scholars, accustomed to modern European nobility with its
legally protected status, sought in vain to discover a similar
group among the Franks. In contrast to other barbarian peoples,
such as the Alemanni and Bavarians, one finds no mention of
nobles in the *Pactus Legis Salicae*. Instead one finds the major
distinction to be between *ingenui*, free men, also called simply
Franci, and various types of nonfree. A special group of *ingenui*
were the *domini*, lords, who controlled various groups of non-
free and thus probably possessed important amounts of land.
However these *domini*, while part of an "upper stratum" of
Frankish society, do not have a special legal position, as would
have been recognized by a higher wergeld.

A higher wergeld for men came only with proximity to the
king. The members of the royal household and bodyguard,
termed *leudes, trustis dominica, convivae regis,* or *antrustiones,*
were the individuals whose special status was protected by a
higher value. Legal historians such as Heike Grahn-Hoek have
thus concluded that, if such a group of nobility had existed
among the Franks before Clovis, he had effectively exterminated
them, and he and his successors created a service nobility that
only gradually separated itself from the king through intermar-
riage with the Roman nobility and by profiting from the inter-
necine wars of the Merovingian family.[18]

Social historians such as Franz Irsigler, on the other hand, are
not as concerned about the existence of legal definitions of noble

status as they are with the de facto status and power of social groups.[19] In fact, evidence from other regions, Scandinavia for example, suggests that the failure of the *Pactus* to mention the nobility may simply indicate how little control even a king like Clovis could exercise over the Frankish nobles. The *Pactus* attempts to limit the blood feud by establishing a tariff of compensations that all parties are forced to accept. A free noble could not be forced to accept compensation, which would offend the honor of his family, and thus could not be listed alongside simple freemen and royal agents. In the other barbarian laws, such as those of the Alemanni and Bavarians, the fact that these tariffs had been imposed from without by the Frankish kings may explain why the aristocracy there is under the law.

If, instead of looking for a legally defined stratum one looks for an aristocracy characterized by inherited status, wealth, and political power, then a Frankish aristocracy is clearly in evidence from the fifth and sixth centuries. In fact, the Frankish aristocracy was similar in many essential respects to that of the Gallo-Romans, a similarity which greatly assisted the rapid amalgamation of the two, particularly north of the Loire where Franks were numerous. Frankish magnates such as the Lavoye chieftain enjoyed considerable landed wealth, land which had been distributed *secundum dignationem,* according to rank, and which was allodial, that is, not rewarded for years of royal service but instead inherited and alienable. That aristocratic position could be passed on to the next generation is clear from the excavation of children's tombs. These often contain weapons and jewelry similar to those found in the tombs of adults, their status as indicated in their burial furnishings certainly came not from their own merits but from that of their parents.

Thus a Frankish aristocracy of inherited wealth preceded or developed along with Merovingian kingship. In fact, while the Merovingians did occasionally make use of men of humble origin, most of the holders of offices, such as duke or count, were selected from among these aristocrats. Gregory of Tours makes frequent allusion to the private property held by such men, who could in turn use their offices both legally and illegally to extend their wealth in estates and villas.

Along with landed wealth, Frankish aristocrats also had their own followings, the equivalent to the royal *trustis,* in addition to servile followers, the *pueri* or "boys" recruited from their estates. These followers too belonged in some sense to the aristocrat's household, which was also composed of kin and of allies, or *amici,* with whom they were sworn to mutual assistance. These followings were particularly important in the conduct of feuds, the normal means by which Frankish aristocrats maintained their relative status and prerogatives vis-à-vis each other.

In addition to land and followers, a Frankish aristocrat enjoyed an immaterial but essential quality that separated him from others—the inherited charisma (German: *Heil*) attached to families that were renowned for their successful leadership, or in other words "noble." Intimately bound up with this quality was the importance of the family's fame. A noble family was one that was known to produce men of military ability and suitability for great deeds.

The aristocratic charisma had to be made manifest to the rest of society, and this was done in the sixth century through the aristocratic lifestyle. Frankish magnates, unlike their Roman senatorial counterparts, did not depend on fortified strongholds for their protection, but practiced a life of fighting, hunting, and perhaps most important, of banqueting, at which solidarity with their potential enemies could be created and their largesse could be demonstrated to their followers through the distribution of gifts.

We have already seen that this openhanded gift giving was one of the most important means by which goods circulated hierarchically in Frankish society. It established and reinforced relationships between giver and recipient in which the latter, by accepting, placed himself in the debt of the former. A leader showed his nobility in his generosity just as he did in his ability to lead his followers against his enemies in acquiring the wealth, largely cattle and movables, which he then distributed. Thus plunder and generosity formed the two parts of the system of exchange and circulation of goods, existing alongside the commercial economy still flourishing in Frankish cities and the agrarian economy on which all else depended.

The majority of the other equipped burials at Lavoye were presumably free men and women, the *ingenui* of the *Pactus,* who formed the majority of the Frankish people and the backbone of its military. Exactly what freedom meant for these people is unclear; freedom is always relative, and particularly in traditional societies in which dependency is a given, the real issue is the nature of the dependency—political, economic, juridical—rather than whether it existed.

The free Franks at Lavoye and elsewhere in Francia were free in that they were obligated to military service under the king and as warriors had the right to participate in public justice. The ability to fulfill military duties was the essential line separating them from the nonfree, not their relationship to the local landholding aristocracy, who might well own the land they worked, command them in times of war, and pressure them into dependency. They were what historian Karl Bosl terms the "king's free," those born free whom the king could, in theory, command through his dukes and counts.[20]

In addition to these "unfree free," Frankish society had various kinds of more deeply and personally dependent persons, the *servi casati,* or slave tenant farmers, and *coloni* of the late Empire, as well as household slaves and, rarely, field slaves on large estates. Traditionally, slaves in Germanic societies were prisoners of war and individuals who lost their freedom as a result of crimes. However, as Germanic tribes moved into the Empire and established themselves alongside and in place of Gallo-Roman landlords, they absorbed the tradition of Roman slavery. Moreover, the increasingly academic distinction between *coloni* and slave tenant farmers largely disappeared. Neither group served under arms, the primary distinction for Frankish freedom, and thus they tended to merge. Both groups were considered part of the land, and juridically belonged to the family of the landlord, be he simple *ingenuus* or aristocrat. To this group might also be added in time those descendants of free Franks who, for economic reasons, could no longer afford to do military service. Gradually they too sank to the level of the nonfree, losing the right to judicial identity and becoming dependents in the strictest sense of the lords on whose lands they lived and worked.

Thus at both ends of the social spectrum an amalgamation of traditional Gallo-Roman and barbarian societies was under way. The primary factor affecting the extent of amalgamation was the relative density of Franks (and other barbarians) relative to the indigenous population.

The extent of the physical settlement of Franks as opposed to the political control by Franks varied enormously across the kingdom. In the east and the north along the lower and middle Rhine the settlement was extremely dense. In these regions the Roman presence, in the form of clerics, merchants, and the remains of the bureaucracy, continued only within the walls of cities such as Cologne, Bonn, and Remagen. In the countryside, the remaining Roman peasants were absorbed into the nonfree dependents of the Franks, whose system of farms and estates replaced the previous Roman organization of the countryside.

There were, however, exceptions. In the area of Trier, for example, which around 480 became part of *Francia Rinensis* even in the eyes of the Eastern Empire, while the fiscal lands entered the royal domain, ecclesiastical land and even small Roman estates and farms continued to exist alongside new Frankish settlements. This pattern is more typical of the settlements further south in the Burgundian kingdom and in the areas of the West acquired by the Goths.

The Ardennes forest formed a natural southeastern boundary for the area of densest Frankish settlement, although as far south as the Seine the generations of slow Germanic migration and settlement before Clovis, which greatly increased after his victory over Syagrius, introduced an important Frankish presence in the region. Between the Seine and the Loire, the Frankish presence was even less significant; archaeological and linguistic evidence suggests scattered islands of Frankish settlement in an overwhelmingly Gallo-Roman countryside.

South of the Loire, the Frankish presence was even less in evidence. Prior to 507, the region had been largely unaffected by its Visigothic lords, who mostly resided in towns from which they controlled the countryside with the assistance of the Aquitainian aristocracy. Little changed with the Frankish conquest in terms of actual population. Certainly some Franks were sent

south as counts and others no doubt settled in the rich cities of Aquitaine, but these scatterings of Franks had little effect on the population, its language, or customs.

While population estimates are impossible to make with any accuracy, one guess puts the number of Franks in the entire kingdom at a maximum of about 150,000 to 200,000 spread out within a population of six or seven million Gallo-Romans. While these figures are almost certainly exaggerated, it is reasonable to think that an estimate of a bit more than two percent Franks is not entirely unreasonable.

This two percent, concentrated above the Loire and dominating the rest of the population, had an effect far beyond its numbers. While in the south, the rare Franks seem to have quickly adopted Roman customs and probably language and identity, the opposite is true in the north. There, Frankish identity came to replace Roman within a few generations. Germanic names predominate, and one rarely hears of a native of the region referred to as a Roman; *Romani* are those who live south of the Loire. All that remained of the Roman identification was the Romance dialect adopted by the population, although as late as the end of the ninth century it is likely that some areas of northern France were still speaking and understanding Frankish. By the eighth century, so thoroughly had this transformation taken place that it was commonly and erroneously believed that after the conquest by Clovis, the *Romani* of the area had been exterminated, although the Franks had adopted the language of their predecessors. It's a myth but one that nevertheless reveals how deeply the transformation of Gaul had been carried out.

A new kind of Christian barbarian kingdom had been established north of the Alps—one which changed forever the face of the West. With the exception of the Burgundians (whose kingdom would be destroyed and integrated into the Frankish realm by Clovis's sons), the core of the Frankish kingdom had been constituted; a loose confederation of barbarian chieftains had been replaced by a single ruler whose wealth was matched only by his capacity for violence; an uneasy alliance of pagan and Arian barbarians and Christian Romans had been replaced by a kingdom unified culticly under a Christian king recognized by

the emperor in Constantinople and supported by orthodox bishops, the representatives of the Gallo-Roman elite. In spite of the disunity and internecine violence that characterized the reigns of Clovis's sons and grandsons, the transformation of the West would continue along the lines he had begun.

Sixth-Century Francia

Clovis's Successors in the Sixth Century

Although there might be a number of Frankish kings and sub-kingdoms, the Frankish kingdom ruled by Clovis's sons continued to be conceived of as a unity: there was only one *regnum Francorum*. Within this divided kingdom his successors continued the main lines of his policies. In terms of external affairs, this often meant concerted efforts to expand the kingdom at the expense of their neighbors; in terms of internal affairs, it often meant the attempt to eliminate each other as he had eliminated his cousins. The result is a complex and violent political narrative, perhaps more reminiscent of late Roman imperial history than of early Germanic tradition. In their internecine struggles the Merovingians had obviously absorbed much from the Romans.

External Expansion

Under Clovis's sons and grandsons the expansion of the Frankish kingdom was largely completed. After a series of partial successes, the Burgundian kingdom was destroyed and absorbed by 534. The Ostrogoths, desperate for assistance against Justinian's wars to reconquer Italy, allowed the Franks to absorb Provence in return for assistance against the Romans two years later. Campaigns against the remaining Visigothic outposts in Aquitaine resulted in the reduction of the Gothic presence north of the Pyrenees to the strip of coast as far east as Narbonne by 541.

In the east, Theuderic I took advantage of the crisis which the.

reconquest of Italy was causing not only in Italy itself but in
the Alpine regions to the north to bring much of the area under
his control. First he conquered the remains of the Ostrogoth's
longtime clients, the Thuringians, and brought the Saxons to
the north under a weak sort of Frankish control. His son Theu-
debert I (reigned 534–548) went still further. The Ostrogoth
withdrawal from Provence left the Alemanni, who were estab-
lished east of Burgundy in what is now southwestern Germany
and northern Switzerland, isolated, and he added them to his
kingdom as well as the Rhaeto-Romans in the Alpine regions
such as Chur. Still further east, he established control over the
newly formed amalgam of peoples, including Thuringians, Lan-
gobards, Erulians, Veti, Alemanni, and others who, set loose by
the movement of the Langobards into Italy at the Byzantine
invitation, had combined with what was left of the Roman pop-
ulation of Noricum to form the Bavarians. In 539 he used this
region as the launching pad for an incursion into Italy where,
through shifting alliances and treachery to both Byzantines and
Ostrogoths, he managed to bring upper Italy under his control.

Theudebert was no simple barbarian king seeking plunder.
With his Roman advisors to educate him, he probably intended
to accomplish what other Gallic pretenders had wanted for
centuries: to use the West as a base for the conquest of the
imperial throne. His plan came to naught, and after his death
his son Theudebald I (reigned 548–555) abandoned upper Italy,
but Theudebert had demonstrated both the ability and the am-
bition of Clovis's successors.

Subsequent Byzantine emperors sought, through subsidies,
emissaries, and support of various factions and pretenders in the
Frankish kingdoms, to use Frankish power to bolster imperial
designs in the West, particularly in trying to eliminate the Lan-
gobards, who had entered Italy during Justinian's attempt at
reconquest. Although largely unsuccessful, such attempts dem-
onstrated both the Byzantine acknowledgment of Frankish su-
periority in the West and the Franks' continued intimacy with
the Empire.

The Merovingians made no attempt to absorb the regions
east of the Rhine or even south of the Loire into a thoroughly

integrated empire; control of the Frankish heartland was challenge enough. With each conquest, they assured the local inhabitants of their right to live by their own law, barbarian or Roman depending on the region, and in Thuringia, Alemannia, Bavaria, Rhaetia, Provence, and even Aquitaine established Frankish dukes (known in Provence as patricians and in Rhaetia as *praeces* or tribunes) to rule, subject to the king. These dukes or patricians were "Frankish" in the sense that they were appointed by the Franks. In Bavaria, for example, the dukes were from the powerful Agilolfing family, which had Burgundian, Frankish, and probably Langobard relations. In Rhaetia, the Frankish commander quickly married into a powerful Roman family of the region, and his descendants continued to monopolize both secular and episcopal office until the end of the eighth century. The same was generally true elsewhere. The dukes either had previous ties or very quickly married into the local elites. As a result, particularly in times of weak Merovingian kings, these regions were likely to become virtually autonomous.

Internal Constitution

Upon the death of Clovis's last surviving son, Chlothar I, in 560, the kingdom was divided once more among his four sons, one of whom died six years later, leaving the kingdom in three major portions. This tradition of dividing the kingdom would continue to be the norm in Francia well into the ninth century. However, subsequent divisions of the kingdom did not result in infinite fragmentation. Instead, by the middle of the sixth century the heart of the kingdom was largely divided into three portions. Although upon each subsequent division the exact boundaries of these portions shifted somewhat, by the next century they were sufficiently well-defined to receive specific names: Austrasia, Neustria, and Burgundy.

While it is tempting to take at face value the name Austrasia ("The East Land"), this would be misleading, since Austrasia included not only the eastern areas between the Rhine and the Meuse rivers and the areas east of the Rhône conquered by Theuderic and his son Theudebert, but also Champagne, the

royal residence in Reims, and later Metz and a large portion of central and southern Gaul. Although portions of the region were, in population at least, more "Germanic," Austrasia in the sixth century was a center of Roman culture and influence. We have seen that here were born imperial political ambitions greater than any that Theodoric the Ostrogoth ever envisioned. The court was also a center for Latin letters; from the Austrasian part of Aquitaine the kings welcomed cultured senatorial aristocrats such as Venantius Fortunatus. This Roman cultural exposure affected Frankish aristocrats as well, increasing the amalgamation of the two elites.

The Austrasian kings apparently intended more than the adoption of Roman culture and imperial conquest. Theudebert may have attempted to establish in his eastern lands the same kind of Roman tax system still functioning in parts of his Gallic possessions. Brunechildis, the Visigothic wife of his successor Sigibert I, attempted to continue this Romanization, with the result that an increasing rift developed between the aristocracy and the monarchy, which resulted in a long and bloody series of wars.

Fiscal reforms may have played a measure in this conflict, but such conflicts in Frankish society tended to be conceived of in personal terms and carried out as family feuds. The family feud in this case divided the Merovingian family and brought the Austrasian monarchy to destruction.

Although less extensive, the region richest in fiscal land, in Roman cities (such as Paris, Tours, and Rouen) and in productive population was Neustria, the "New West Lands," with the Merovingian capital in Soissons. The Neustrian king Chilperic (reigned 561–584) spent much of his reign fighting his brother, the Austrasian Sigibert (reigned 561–575), and the latter's widow, Brunechildis, over the extent of his kingdom. This war, ostensibly over conflicting claims to the inheritance of their deceased brother Charibert (died 567), was simultaneously a bitter feud initiated by Chilperic's wife Fredegund and her arch rival Brunechildis. Chilperic was already married to Fredegund (among others) when he took as his second wife the Visigothic princess Galswintha, sister of Brunechildis. As Gregory says of

Chilperic's attitude toward his new bride, "He loved her very dearly, for she had brought a large dowry with her."[1] Egged on by Fredegund and fearful that Galswintha might try to return home with her dowry, he had her killed. His brothers, especially Sigibert, husband of Brunechildis, outraged and eager to seize the opportunity to divide Chilperic's kingdom, attempted to depose him. The result was a three-generation feud that wrecked the Merovingian family and ended only after the deaths of ten kings and the execution of Brunechildis by Chilperic's son Chlothar in 613.

The third section of the kingdom was Burgundy, which included not only the old kingdom of the Burgundians but also a large region of Gaul reaching to the capital of Orléans. This region initially was composed of large populations of Burgundians, Romans, and Franks. Burgundy particularly depended on the important ecclesiastical province of Lyon, which had long been the center of senatorial power. King Gunthchramn (reigned 561–593) depended heavily on these Roman aristocrats in his administration, filling its most important position, that of patrician, with three successive Romans. In a short time the three cultural groups became fused, although the Roman tradition predominated. In response to the significance of the Rhône Romans, in the 570s Gunthchramn moved his court to Chalon, which he developed into a religious as well as political capital.

Although necessarily caught up in the violent feud between the wives of his two brothers, Gunthchramn seems to have been more influenced by a Christian-Roman ideology of government than the others, perhaps resulting from the fact that his kingdom was the most Roman of the three regions. Here not only Roman culture but Roman traditions of justice and Christian ideas of royal obligation could take root. However, as we have seen Roman tradition was every bit as prone to violence as was that of the Franks. A more likely explanation for Gunthchramn's style of rulership was his personal piety—Gregory of Tours portrays him in an extremely favorable light. Still, he remained capable of the violence that was characteristic of late antiquity. To cite but one example, when he suspected his chamberlain of having poached aurochs, a now nearly extinct European buf-

falo, in the royal forest of the Vosges, he ordered a trial by
combat. When the chamberlain's nephew and the accusing for-
ester killed each other in the vicious hand-to-hand fighting, the
chamberlain attempted to find sanctuary in a nearby church.
The king had him apprehended, tied to a post, and stoned to
death. The only difference between his conduct and that of his
grandfather Clovis was perhaps that, as Gregory records, he later
regretted having a faithful servant killed for so small an offense.

The constant feuding among Clovis's descendants weakened
all parties and contributed to the power of the aristocracy,
Frankish and Roman, whose help was essential for victory. This
power was far from unified, however, even though aristocratic
groups might at times coalesce to fight a particularly hated royal
official. The violence of the Merovingian family was mirrored
in the violent interrelationships in the aristocracy, and in this
respect the Romans were no different from the Franks. Private
warfare was the rule.

In fact, any distinction between private motives and public
ones on the part of Merovingian kings and aristocrats is arti-
ficial. An attempt to explain aristocratic opposition groups need
not choose between the opposition of the aristocracy to the im-
position of Roman taxation and governance and private griev-
ances. Taxation, like feuding, had long been a private affair. If,
in the accounts of Gregory one cannot tell public from personal
motives, it is because they were indistinguishable. Whether king
or aristocrat, one fought for family honor and for independent
lordship. However not until the seventh century did the aris-
tocratic role in this struggle become dominant.

The one group retaining something of a traditional sense of
the *res publicae,* of the public sphere, was the clergy. Although
they too were almost exclusively drawn from the aristocracy,
whether Roman or Romanized Frankish, and although they
were often deeply involved in violent conflict, they nevertheless
managed as a group to maintain and increase their power and
authority not only on behalf of themselves and their families
but on behalf of their office as well. King Chilperic I once com-
plained that "There is no one with any power left except the
bishops."[2] This was of course an exaggeration, but more than

anyone else, the episcopacy held the keys to power, both human and divine, in sixth-century Francia.

Much has been written about the Frankish church. In reality, no such thing existed. The religious landscape was composed of a great number of churches, each headed by a bishop and serving as the cultic and political center of the local elite. In the course of the sixth century the Frankish monarchs brought some sense of unity to the episcopate, but ultimately it remained as factious as the Gallo-Roman society which controlled and populated it.

Moreover, in addition to the episcopal church, there existed at least two and ultimately three monastic churches, each with its own traditions, its own relation to the local elites, and its religious focus. These cleavages in turn corresponded to the major cultural regions of Francia, which were in general the region north of the Loire, Aquitaine, and the east, including the Rhône watershed and the Provençal littoral.

Bishops: Noble in Birth and in Faith

The first church in Gaul had been the episcopal church, and its traditions stretched back into the most distant memory of the senatorial aristocracy. In fact, its period of establishment, the late third century, corresponded to the period of the creation of this provincial aristocracy; thus both were born together and formed an inseparable institution.

The great majority of early Merovingian bishops were of aristocratic Gallo-Roman background. This was only to be expected given the role the episcopacy played in late Roman Gaul. In fact, the lives of Merovingian bishop saints, composed in the seventh century, generally begin by describing the noble family from which the bishop had sprung: "he was noble by birth, but still more noble by faith" is repeated with minor variations throughout the literature. The implication is clear—illustrious ancestry was expected of a bishop. This secular preeminance, however, could be supplemented by religious virtue, which in turn reflected on the entire family from which he came.

Statistical examinations of the social origins of the Merovingian episcopacy are extremely dangerous because of the lack of

data. As Martin Heinzelmann points out in a study of the 707 bishops whose names are known from the eight ecclesiastical provinces of Tours, Rouen, Sens, Reims, Trier, Metz, Cologne, and Besançon, for example, fully 328 are known only by their names.[3] However, of the 179 bishops who can be assigned to a social rank, only eight were, like Iniuriosus of Tours, who was "of inferior but nevertheless free parentage," definitely not of the senatorial aristocracy. Of course, one can well imagine that given the aristocratic orientation of the sources, the lower the social rank the less likely this information was to have been conveyed. However, even lacking specific biographical information, circumstantial evidence such as important positions held by other members of bishops' families, previous high secular offices held by bishops such as referendary, *maior domus,* or *domesticus,* and the reappearance of the same names in lists of bishops in the same or neighboring sees, all suggest that the great majority of the bishops belonged to powerful and important families.

So much is this the case that one can speak of "episcopal families" that controlled sees for generations. The most famous is that of the historian Gregory of Tours. Both Gregory's mother and father belonged to distinguished families from Auvergne which had provided bishops of Langres, Geneva, Lyon, and of course Tours. Gregory boasted that of the eighteen previous bishops of Tours, all but five had been his kinsmen. His case is probably typical. We know, for example, that at Nantes, Châlons, Paris, Sens, Laon, Metz, Orléans, and Trier, it was normal for sons to succeed fathers or nephews to succeed uncles.

Such episcopal dynasties reflected both the power of bishops to influence the naming of their successors and the networks, often stretching back generations, uniting senatorial families across Gaul. Control of episcopal sees was one of the major goals in family strategies, and the competition between senatorial families could be vicious and deadly. An illuminating example is that between the families of Gregory of Tours and Felix of Nantes (c. 512–582). Felix was a member of one of the most powerful families of Aquitaine. He was energetic in promoting the religious and secular affairs of both his see and his family, which

were intimately intertwined. Venantius Fortunatus, who admired him, credits him with having converted the "ferocious race of Saxons," that is, the community of Saxon "pirates" established along the coast and officially recognized by the Merovingians. At Nantes itself, Felix sought to redirect commerce on the Loire towards the right bank to profit his city.[4] Such efforts also benefited his family.

Felix succeeded his father, Eumerius, as bishop of Nantes when the latter died in 549 or 550, and he led the life of a great aristocrat. Fortunatus described his favorite estate, Charcé, which included over 3,000 hectares along the Loire in Poitou, as an ideal aristocratic domain with vineyards and pine-covered hills. The tradition of his family's control of Nantes was probably already old in the late sixth century; Martin Heinzelmann has drawn attention to the appearance of the relatively rare names Eumerius and Nonnechius (the name of Felix's successor and kinsman) as bishops of Nantes in the fourth and fifth centuries.

In contrast to Fortunatus, Gregory had a low estimation of this family in general and of Felix in particular. He characterized him as "a man whose greed and arrogance knew no bounds."[5] Gregory's hatred of him was understandable. Around 580 when the archdeacon Riculf attempted to have Gregory removed from office, probably because he had himself been elected by the local clergy, Felix not only supported Riculf but, when the plot failed, he welcomed the archdeacon in Nantes.

Felix's motives in the affair are unclear, but certainly they had as much to do with familial competition as with ecclesiastical politics. He had accused Gregory's brother Peter, a deacon of the church of Langres, of having murdered his own bishop-elect and kinsman, Silvester, in order to succeed him. The accusation enraged Gregory, perhaps because it may have been too close to the truth. A few years previously Peter had certainly been deeply involved in the condemnation and dismissal of another deacon, Lampadius, and this involvement eventually caused Peter's death. Felix's charge against Peter concerning Silvester may well have been part true. Certainly Gregory's family looked upon Langres as another of "their" sees, and Peter may have thought that he, rather than Silvester, ought to have succeeded Tetricus

in 572. Whatever the truth of the affair, Lampadius so stirred up Silvester's son that the latter struck Peter down in the streets of Langres. Obviously Felix did not approve of the manner in which Gregory's family members reached episcopal office.

Gregory felt the same about that of Felix. When the latter lay dying he attempted to name as his successor his nephew Burgundio. Gregory, as Burgundio's metropolitan bishop, was responsible for the young man's tonsure and consecration, and he had the delicious revenge of gravely pointing out the irregularity of Felix's action, sending Burgundio home with the advice to "apply yourself seriously to all that the Church asks of you. It may well be that when God decides that the moment has come to remove your uncle . . . you yourself will be given episcopal rank." After Felix's death Gregory could not prevent a more distant relative of the late bishop, Nonnechius, from being named, but it certainly was not Felix's chosen Burgundio.

Such complex family rivalries focused on the office of bishop because it was a prize worth fighting for. Control of major bishoprics was the key to the continued regional power of the kindred. It also provided great wealth. From the fourth century on, enormous amounts of land had been passing into the hands of the church, and all this was controlled by the bishop. A glimpse of just how this wealth might be used to benefit the family can be seen in the rare testaments left by Frankish bishops, such as that of Remigius of Reims, who named as his heirs his church and his nephews Lupus, bishop of Soissons, Agricola, a priest, and Bertram of Le Mans (died 616). The latter named the church as his sole heir. These testaments dispose of estates, churches, slaves, *coloni,* and movables acquired through family inheritance, royal gifts, purchase, exchange, and confiscation. The continued prosperity of the family demanded that it control bishopric wealth, and after generations of such donations it is little wonder that families came to view episcopal succession as a hereditary right worth killing to defend.

This killing took place indiscriminately in Gallo-Roman and Frankish families, if indeed the two can be distinguished by this time. It is usually stated that the Frankish episcopacy was almost exclusively drawn from the ranks of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy

well into the eighth century. In fact, the episcopal office has been seen as the bulwark of the Roman population, and it alone could protect Roman traditions and culture from the barbarian Franks.

Certainly in the early sixth century and, in the south, through much of the seventh and eighth, bishops did come from great senatorial families. However, alliances and intermarriages between Romans and Franks began even before the time of Clovis, and in the course of the sixth century these families began to fuse, uniting the courtly favor and military power of Frankish leaders with the cultural traditions and regional patronage and kin networks of the senatorial aristocracy. Most of the evidence marshaled to demonstrate the contrary is drawn from the occurrence of Roman names in lists of Merovingian bishops, which some scholars have seen as proof of continued domination of the episcopacy by "Roman" families. However, sharp distinctions between Roman and Frankish families, particularly in the north and in Burgundy, are difficult to make, especially on the basis of names. Sons destined for the clergy may have been given Christian or Latin names regardless of family background. But very early on, Germanic names came to predominate in the north, even in families of Roman background, partly because of intermarriage with Franks and partly as a political statement of loyalty to the Frankish kings. By the second half of the sixth century one finds among the descendants of the family of Bishop Remigius of Reims not only Roman names such as Lupus, but also the Frankish names Romulf and quite probably Leudegisel and Attalenus. The same process took place across the Rhine, as the old Roman families in Trier and Cologne merged with the Frankish kindreds with whom they shared power, and in Burgundy, where a developing local aristocracy presented an amalgam of Burgundian, Frankish, and Roman aristocratic traditions. The prize sought was the preservation of family power and autonomy, regardless of the pedigree of the family.

The importance of the prize and the magnitude of the task of controlling the office explains the tradition, already established in antiquity, of electing mature men of proven administrative and political ability. True, some bishops arrived at their

positions after a regular career in the clergy, rising from lector
through priest to bishop, but this was so much the exception
that when it occurred, as in the case of Bishop Nivard of Reims
or Heraclius of Angoulême, hagiographers considered it worthy
of comment. When Cato was chosen by the clergy and people of
Clermont-Ferrand as their candidate to succeed Saint Gaul in
551, he presented his clerical background as evidence of his
qualifications:

> I have been promoted through all of the ranks of clerical prefer-
> ment according to canonical precept. I was a lector for ten years;
> for five years I performed the duties of subdeacon; for fifteen years
> I served as deacon; and I have held the dignity of the priesthood
> for the last twenty years. What is left but that I should be ordained
> bishop as the reward for my faithful service?[7]

He didn't get the job.

Many bishops entered their office from secular life and even
for those who rose within the clergy, the priesthood was nor-
mally not the route to ecclesiastical office.

Young men destined for the episcopacy were normally sent to
a close relative who was a bishop to be educated by him. A
thorough education was expected of a bishop, who in turn was
responsible for the education of his clergy and other young peo-
ple sent by kin and allies to serve as members of his household.
However, since most of these bishops had entered the church
late in life, the nature of this education was usually more in
the tradition of late Latin letters than of theological or ascetic
and spiritual instruction. Minor orders could be quickly ac-
quired, but the position most sought after by ambitious clerics
was that of archdeacon. The archdeacon was the most important
figure in the bishop's court, controlling the temporals of the
diocese and in general administering the diocese for the bishop.
Not surprisingly therefore, the archdeacon was in an excellent
position to succeed the bishop he served, both because he was
widely experienced and, since he controlled the diocesan wealth,
he could use it to bribe the king, the rest of the clergy, and the
people. Such was the case of Riculf with whom Gregory had
had so much trouble. Given the depth of support he found

within the clergy of Tours, Riculf may well have been their choice over Gregory, in spite of (or even due to) Gregory's familial tradition and Riculf's relatively humble background.

Those few bishops who did have a solid theological and ascetic background tended to come to their office from the monastic church. Here alone a serious religious education was likely to be available, and when this was combined with the administrative and political skills of a capable abbot, it made a strong candidate for episcopal office indeed. Moreover, many abbots had entered religious life only after a period of active service at court. High-born, well-connected, educated, and experienced, they made ideal bishops from the perspective of their family, the clergy, and the king. The model for such a bishop was Pope Gregory the Great (pope 590–604), a member of an aristocratic Roman family who had been prefect of a city from 579 to 585 and then had retired to a monastery of his own foundation before being forced to assume the papacy. In Gaul, bishops such as Salvinus of Albi, Numeranus of Trier, and Guntharius of Tours followed similar career patterns.

If many bishops held secular office prior to entering monasteries on their way to the episcopal dignity, many more went directly from their secular positions to their sees. The office of bishop thus crowned a *cursus honorum* in the traditional sense. In the fifth and sixth centuries, this career progression often went through the surviving offices of the later Empire or positions as regional administrators; increasingly in the seventh century this meant service at the royal court.

Such a case was that of Gregory of Tours's own great-grandfather, Bishop Gregory of Langres. The earlier Gregory had served for forty years as the count of Autun, roughly from 466 until 506, had married Armentaria, a woman from a similar senatorial family background and probably daughter of Bishop Armentarius of Langres, and had produced a family. After the death of his wife, Gregory "turned to the Lord" and was elected bishop of Langres, in which capacity he served until his death around 540.[8]

In the mid sixth century, such "conversions" became even more common as part of the political-familial rivalries we have

discussed above. Thus, for example, after the death of Bishop Ferreolus of Uzès, both Albinus, the prefect of Marseille, and the candidate of the rector of Provence, Dynamius, and the latter's deposed predecessor and rival, Jovinus, wanted to be his successor. Albinus was appointed by Dynamius without the permission of King Gunthchramn. An effort would surely have been made to depose him had he not died shortly after. His timely demise cleared the way for a new appointment, but before Jovinus could be installed Dynamius appointed the deacon Marcellus, a son of his friend Felix, a member of a powerful senatorial family from Marseille. The result was a war, in the course of which Jovinus besieged the city of Uzès before being bribed off by Bishop Marcellus.[9]

In the course of the sixth and seventh centuries, an increasingly common background for bishops was the position of count of the city, the representative of the king in the *civitas*. In some cases, the episcopal dignity may have been seen as the normal crowning of the *cursus honorum* which followed the position of count. The distinction between secular and religious office had become as blurred as that which in the period before Diocletian had separated civil and military careers.

Men of high rank tended to be married, and if the wife, unlike Armentaria, the wife of Bishop Gregory of Langres, had not died before their husbands' elections, they moved into the episcopal residence and into public affairs as the *episcopa*, the bishop's wife. The tradition of clerical celibacy was relatively new and indifferently followed in the Frankish kingdom. Although sexual abstinence had been demanded by various popes from the second half of the fourth century, it became an ideal in the Gallic episcopacy only under the increasing influence of Eastern ascetic tradition which, as we saw in Chapter Two, pervaded the senatorial aristocracy in the fourth century. By the sixth century, it was generally expected that married individuals entering the clergy would retain their wives, but that they would refrain from marital relations and the wives would assist the husbands in their offices. To avoid any hint of scandal, they lived apart, and the bishop's wife was not even allowed into his bedroom, in some cases a sort of episcopal dormitory where he slept surrounded by his clergy.

Progressively in the course of the sixth century, wives of deacons, priests, and bishops became more marginal and their status was decreased by Conciliar enactments. However, through the middle of the century they, and in particular the *episcopa,* played a public role along with their husbands. The most complimentary portrait of an *episcopa* is that presented by Gregory of Tours of the wife of late fifth-century Bishop Namatius of Clermont-Ferrand. She is depicted as undertaking personally the construction of the Church of Saint Stephen. She liked to sit within the church reading edifying "stories of long ago" and telling the workers which of these she wished to see depicted on the church walls.[10] In spite of this positive image, however, Gregory does not deign to mention the woman's name. His image of the wife of Sidonius Apollinaris, who was the daughter of Emperor Avitus, is somewhat negative. After Sidonius's election he was in the habit of handing out the family silver to beggars who appeared at his door. His (likewise unnamed) wife would chide her husband for what she considered his excessive generosity and then seek out the beggars and buy back the silver.[11]

The progressive decline of the ascetic ideal among sixth-century aristocrats may have resulted in a change in the comportment of the *episcopa* along with that of her husband. In any case, Gregory has little good to report about bishops' wives from his own time. More typical, in Gregory's view, was Susanna, the wife of Bishop Priscus of Lyon, who was consecrated in 573. Not only did she actively assist her husband in his persecution of the supporters of his predecessor, the saintly Nicetius, but she and her attendants would visit the living quarters of the bishop. With great satisfaction Gregory reports that ultimately she went mad and, possessed by a demon, ran bare-headed through the streets of Lyon, proclaiming that Nicetius had indeed been a man of God and calling upon him to spare her.[12]

The only potential rival that bishops faced for authority in the city was the count, but with the disappearance of civil government the rivalry was no equal contest. The position of bishop was considered a step up from that of count of the city, with the former office often filled by an aristocrat who had already served as count. The office of count lost progressively in prestige and

power to that of bishop in the sixth century, partly due to the higher social background bishops tended to have. While later the church might have provided a path for social mobility denied by secular pursuits, the opposite was largely true in the seventh and eighth centuries. Counts on the other hand, although usually from the same background as bishops, occasionally came from humble origins and if capable or clever, could rise through royal service. This was the case of Leudast, the count of the city of Tours, who was Gregory's greatest enemy. If Gregory can be believed, Leudast's was a classic success story. Born the son of a slave and too delicate even to work in the kitchen, he nevertheless rose in royal favor to become master of the stables and finally count of Tours. Further he could not rise; although he had powerful supporters in some quarters, he was no match for the well-connected bishop. Ultimately he was tortured to death on the orders of Queen Fredegund.[13]

Toward the end of the sixth century the imbalance between the count and bishop became such that the former's appointment needed approval by the latter or else the bishop actually appointed the count. Gregory, for example, had been requested by King Theudebert to reappoint Leudast. Rather than the representative of the king, the count had become an agent in episcopal administration.

The administrative experience acquired by such bishops no doubt prepared them well for the administration of their sees, and their political power made possible their frequent activities as the protectors of their communities against royal demands. If bishops often stood up to kings or their agents in order to resist unusual or excessive taxes, they had a certain advantage as representatives of the local power elite needed by the king. The bishops' protection of the people was often as much a defense of their own largely hereditary lordship as it was of the Lord's faithful.

Birth, learning, and proven administrative ability were necessary for a bishop but they alone were inadequate—a bishop needed election and consecration. Here ecclesiastical custom (one can not yet really speak of ecclesiastical law), royal prerogative, and local power politics could and often did meet to create major crises.

Tradition demanded that the bishop be elected by the "clergy and people" of the diocese. In practice this was probably never how the majority of bishops were selected, although in the isolation of late Roman Gaul, something akin to this formula was probably followed, if by "clergy" one means primarily the archdeacon and by "people" the senatorial aristocracy. Following the establishment of the Frankish kingship, a new element was introduced, or rather reintroduced—the approval of the king. Thus in the sixth century the elements combining to select the new bishop were king, diocesan clergy, and aristocracy. In addition, just over the horizon would be found the *populus* in the sense of the masses, who might on occasion be excited to play a role in a disputed succession. The possible different titrations of this volatile mixture were as numerous as elections.

Because no regular mechanism for an orderly succession existed, the approaching death of a bishop was awaited with a mixture of anxiety and hope on all sides. An episcopal death and interregnum could bring violence, looting, and a time to settle old scores. In fact, such a period of troubles seems to have been expected. When Bishop Theodore of Marseille was captured by his enemy, Dynamius, the delighted clergy of the city pillaged and looted the episcopal residence "just as if the bishop were already dead."[14] In his case, he survived and was even returned to his see. In some instances, the death of the incumbent had been precipitated by those hoping to succeed to the office. This had been the accusation against Gregory's own brother; Gregory accused Bishop Frontonius of Angoulême of having murdered his predecessor Marachar;[15] at Lisieux a priest and the archdeacon conspired to murder Bishop Aetherius, and only the failure of the cleric hired to do the job saved him.[16]

In order to attempt to provide for an orderly succession and to maintain the office in their family, some bishops tried to secure the election and consecration of their successors during their lifetimes. We have seen the attempt on the part of Bishop Felix of Nantes to ensure his nephew's succession. Such practice was contrary to ecclesiastical custom and encountered serious opposition. More frequently the bishop would state his strong preference for his successor, as did the saintly Bishop Mauilio of Cahors, who successfully urged that Queen Ultrogotha's referendary, Ur-

sicinus, be elected in his place.[17] Similarly Bishop Sacerdos of Lyon was succeeded by his choice, Nicetius.[18]

The competition between rival families, royal candidates, and the favorites of local clergy began in earnest as soon as the bishop was dead. Normally, three things had to be secured—election, confirmation by the king, and consecration, the last being the most important. Once an individual had been consecrated, even if scandalously elected or unconfirmed, while he could as a last resort be exiled and even excommunicated, it was extremely difficult to replace him before his death, and in any case he remained a bishop. Bishop Faustianus of Dax, it is true, was deposed at the second council of Mâcon by King Gunthchramn because he had been ordered consecrated by the king's rival, Gundovald, but even then the three bishops who had consecrated him were ordered to provide for him and pay him 100 gold pieces per year.[19] The sacred nature of consecration was such that God's annointed remained a bishop, regardless of how he reached that position. One sees a similar philosophy regarding secular office, particularly that of the later emperors and the king. God worked through the most evil of men, and He alone could remove them, although He might well use other men as His agents.

Better than anything else, the drama surrounding an episcopal election indicates the complexities and ambiguities of political power as they existed in sixth-century Francia. This most highly prized office demanded some sort of consensus or at least that a temporary truce be established among the differing factions. Every case was different, and Gregory of Tours's vivid accounts often obscure more than they enlighten. Why, when Bishop Laban of Eauze died, did Childebert allow himself to be bribed by a layman, Bertram, into confirming Bertram as Laban's successor, and then refuse, upon the latter's death, the bribes of his designated successor, the deacon Waldo, who was probably the godson of Bertram and moreover enjoyed the full support of the citizens of Eauze?[20] Gregory doesn't explain and we cannot guess. In this instance the king, whatever his motivation, was able to enforce his will against a united clergy and populace. In other situations, such as the dispute in Uzès, two successive royal can-

didates were blocked by powerful local interests. Here one sees the limits of royal power.

Religious Role of the Bishop

The power of the bishop was not reducible to the strength of his support at court, to his family, and to his good relationship with his supporters at home. Essentially he was considered the agent of God's will in his community, and the core of his power lay in this control of the sacred. If this is hard to see through the blood and intrigues of episcopal politics, it is because we fail to share the view of divine providence common to the sixth century.

The model bishop was an administrator both of his clergy and of the monasteries in his diocese, but he was above all a defender of the faith and protector of the poor. Defense of the faith might mean, in rare instances, a theological defense of doctrine against the errors of the Arians or, in even rarer instances, of a Chilperic, a learned Frankish king who attempted to write a treatise on the Trinity. But in reality Francia was largely devoid of real heretics just as it was of real theologians. Somewhat more frequently, it meant attempts to eliminate polytheistic practices within their dioceses, which might mean the kind of syncretistic religious observances carried on no doubt by recently converted Franks. At the Council of Orléans in 533, for example, bishops assembled primarily from northern Aquitaine enacted measures against Catholics who continued to make sacrifices to idols, a measure reaffirmed in the same city at a council eight years later.[21] One must not imagine that paganism was limited to the more barbarian north. Christianity had been largely an affair of the aristocracy in Gaul, and in rural areas throughout Francia paganism was by no means dead and traditional agrarian rituals persisted for centuries. The countryside could not be fully Christianized until the network of parishes extended into every corner of the kingdom, a development which would not take place until the ninth century.

The more essential, if prosaic, role of defending the faith was the instruction of the laity and the clergy, both through sermons and through the fostering of schools. Bishops educated in the

monastic tradition, particularly that of Lérins, were best equipped
for this task, and from the model Merovingian bishop, Caesarius
of Arles, we have a collection of sermons that show his ability to
put his rhetorical education to the task of educating the clergy
and laity of his diocese. Through the sixth century, most bishops
had a good education in Latin letters if not in Christian doc-
trine, and thus could at least adapt the teaching of Caesarius and
others to their own needs.

The task perceived as more immediate by the episcopate was
to provide discipline in the particularly turbulent and unruly
world in which they lived. This meant both establishing a sense
of unity and purpose within the disparate factions which made
up their communities and the community of bishops, and estab-
lishing and maintaining norms of Christian conduct for clergy
and laity alike.

In this world of strong personalities, the primary source of
unity for the competing forces within society was sought in the
personality of the saints. One of the major achievements of re-
cent scholarship, particularly that of Peter Brown, is to elucidate
the absolutely critical social role that saints' cults played in early
medieval society.[22] In these communities, often split by the most
violent and overt kinds of competition, in which no living man
or woman could be assured of unanimous acceptance, the saint
became the rallying point. He (or she) alone was both part of the
supernatural world, and, through his tomb, continued to reside
among and serve the people. He was, then, a tangible, physical
source of authority and power, a sure point within a world of
constantly changing fortunes.

While no Christian doubted the power of saints, at the death
of any individual, some might doubt the sanctity of that particu-
lar person. After all, every living man and woman of any note
was caught up in the political struggles already described. Bishop
Priscus of Lyon and his wife Susanna, for example, were not at
all prepared to consider his predecessor Nicetius one of God's
elect. It was then necessary for the community to arrive at a con-
sensus concerning the saint's special status, and this could be di-
rected by the bishop. To this end, the rhetorical training of the
Frankish episcopate was ideal; their task was to persuade, to

show the divided community the unmistakable signs of the saint's power. By interpreting the misfortunes of enemies and the good luck of friends in terms of their comportment relative to the saints, bishops could work to form consensus about the saint, which simultaneously established consensus about the bishop. Bishops and saints were thus mutually dependent on each other for their reputations.

The control of saints by bishops was not granted without challenge by the rest of society or indeed by the saints themselves. The first challenge, which the Western episcopacy faced head-on and largely overcame, was posed by the latter group. If the bishops' greatest source of spiritual power was that of dead saints, their greatest threat was that of living ones. In the East, holy men and women, through their lives of asceticism and detachment, had become a major factor in the balance of power in village, regional, and occasionally, in imperial affairs. Such persons received their power not from the bishop, not from the emperor or his representatives, but directly from acclamation by public opinion as emissaries of God. Such a situation was entirely unacceptable to the episcopal aristocracy of Francia. The story of Vulfolaïc the Langobard shows how the episcopate reacted to the threat.[23]

As a small (and presumably Arian) child, Vulfolaïc had heard the name of Martin, and without any knowledge of his life or works, developed a great devotion to him. In time, he taught himself to read, became a disciple of Abbot Aredius of Limoges, and finally visited Tours, where he obtained as a relic dust from the tomb of Saint Martin. On his return to Limoges, the dust miraculously expanded, spilling out of the small box in which he carried it around his neck. Inspired by this miracle, he moved to the region of Trier where he found, in the ruins of a temple, a statue of Diana on a pillar, which the locals worshiped. Vulfolaïc climbed another pillar and, in imitation of Simeon Stylites, there endured the harshness of a German winter. Soon crowds from the neighboring manors flocked to see this holy man, and from his column he preached against the idol on the neighboring one. Convinced by his words and example and assisted by his prayers, the locals destroyed the statue. As effective as his efforts had

been, however, the local bishops objected. Finally they sent him off on an errand and in his absence had his column destroyed. Heartbroken but not daring to disobey the bishops, he took up residence with the local clergy.

To Gregory and his fellow bishops, Vulfolaic had done just about everything wrong that one could, with only one exception, which nevertheless redeemed him in the end.

First, he was a rustic. Vulfolaic was of obscure barbarian parentage—the Langobards in the sixth century were the rudest and least cultivated people within the Roman world. As evidence of his simpleness, he developed his devotion to Martin without the guidance of a properly trained bishop who could instill in him the proper *reverentia,* that deeper, inner intelligence accessible to the trained cleric.

Second, he had allowed the miracle of the expansion of the sacred dust to fill him with pride. Instead of remaining in his monastery, he took this as a sign that he was somehow marked for greater and more public things and set out on his own mission. Gregory explains elsewhere just how this miracle should have been handled. When the grain harvest at a Bordeaux monastery was miraculously saved by the prayers of a young novice, the wise abbot immediately had the youth seized, beaten, and shut up in his cell for a week lest he be inflated with pride at having been an instrument of God's will.[24]

Third, without education or authority, Vulfolaic had begun to preach to the people, a charge reserved to the bishop. Here indeed was the blind leading the blind, and it mattered little that the effects of his preaching were the destruction of the idol and the conversion of the people.

At this point Vulfolaic was within an inch of being cast in with the wandering preachers, miracle workers, and other troublemakers who often ended their days rotting in episcopal prisons. He was saved by his obedience. In the end, he accepted their decision, made no attempt to reestablish the column, and ended his days a deacon, firmly under episcopal authority.

This theme of episcopal control of the saints occurs again and again, both in Gregory's history, his lives of saints, and in Merovingian hagiography generally. It is part of an overall plan to assimilate every possible form of supernatural power to the con-

trol of the hierarchy, and to brand what could not be so assimilated as apostasy or paganism. Even in Gregory's accounts of the lives of hermits, the bishop is never far away. When, for example, Friardus, a recluse near Nantes, lay dying, his last wish was to see his bishop, and he died as soon as the latter arrived. Before Saint Patroclus began his career as a hermit, he was careful to first appear before his bishop and request tonsure.[25]

Not only did the episcopal tradition attempt to assimilate the power of Christian saints, but it attempted to assimilate popular beliefs into the Christian tradition as well. Most illuminating in this regard is the account of Saint Marcel of Paris and the dragon, told by Venantius Fortunatus. In brief, a dragon had been terrorizing the outskirts of Paris. Bishop Marcel arrived on the scene, tamed the beast, and ordered it to disappear. The monster complied and was not seen again. As analyzed recently by Jacques Le Goff, this legend takes on the character of a fusion of episcopal authority and popular beliefs.[26] The dragon, who appears across the barbarian and Mediterranean worlds, represents not only the devil but also serves as an ambivalent symbol of earthly and aquatic natural forces, at once dangerous and attractive. In the legend, the bishop is seen as the civilizing force triumphing over the forces of nature, but not destroying them. The fearful dragon was so impressed with Saint Marcel that it lowered its head in supplication and wagged its tail like a small dog. The bishop, in driving the monster away, had acknowledged the forces of nature, in this case the marshy and uninhabitable swamps near the Seine, and brought them into a rational and civilized relationship with humankind. The bishop thus drew his prestige in the community not only from his ability to appropriate traditional Christian power to himself, but from his ability to dominate more ancient, elemental powers as well.

The Monastery

In 811 the great Frankish emperor Charlemagne ordered an investigation:

> Let it be determined whether there were monks in Gaul before the arrival of the Rule of St. Benedict in these ecclesiastical provinces.[27]

By the ninth century, the rule of Benedict had become the norm for monastic life in the West. However, if Charlemagne's researchers did their work properly, they would have had to answer that, not only were there other forms of monastic life in Gaul prior to the introduction of the Benedictine rule, but that Benedictine monasticism was a relative newcomer to Francia. Three forms of monastic traditions preceded it—that of Martin of Tours, that of Lérins, and the Irish tradition of Saint Columbanus. An understanding of the first two are essential to an understanding of sixth-century Francia.

Martin of Tours

The life of Saint Martin presents a microcosm of the Western Empire in the fourth century. Martin was the son of a soldier, born c. 316 in modern Szombathely, Hungary, one of the vital Pannonian military posts defending the Danubian frontier. He moved to Italy when his father, a military tribune, was transferred to Pavia, and there became a catechumen. In accordance with the Roman law tying sons to the professions of their fathers, Martin became a soldier and his unit was transferred to Amiens. There was said to have occurred the famous story of his cloak. Seeing a shivering beggar at the city gates one day, he cut his military cloak in half and gave one half to the poor man. Although his appearance in only half a cloak was met with laughter in the city, that night he had a vision of the Lord, who was wearing the half he had given away. His portion of the cloak in time became the *cappa*, the most important sacred relic of the Frankish kings, guarded and venerated by the clerics in the royal household who made up the *capella* or chapel.

Martin was baptized at Amiens and shortly after, at Worms, was allowed to leave the military. He then went to Bishop Hilarius of Poitiers to perfect himself in his new faith. He soon traveled to Italy to see his parents again, but before he could return to Poitiers he heard that the Arian Visigoths had exiled Hilarius to the East. Unable to return to Gaul, he led for a time a hermitic life on the Isle of Albenga in the Tyrrhenian Sea, his first personal experience with monasticism. When Hilarius was al-

lowed to return to Poitiers in 361, Martin immediately joined him and received from him permission to lead a solitary life at Ligugé, which he had begun at Albenga. Before long, his reputation spread; a community of followers joined him, and he was often called away to preach in central and western Gaul. When Bishop Lidorius of Tours died in 371 the citizens tricked Martin into entering the city and made him their bishop.

Although Martin exercised his office conscientiously, he continued to lead his monastic life in a cell a short distance from the city. Again, a monastic community grew up around him at this new monastery, Marmoutier. From here Martin continued to involve himself in the religious affairs of the West, traveling as far as Trier and even Rome in his role as a major spokesperson for orthodoxy. He died in 397 and was buried in a stone sarcophagus in his monastery, which in time became a major pilgrimage site.

Initially, however, the cult of Saint Martin and his monastic tradition did not spread far beyond the region of his most intense activity. Prior to the adoption of Saint Martin by Clovis as the special patron of his family, his cult was largely limited to the Loire region, Aquitaine, and a few sites in Spain. The monastic tradition he had introduced, a rather eclectic form combining Eastern traditions of asceticism with the life of the Gallic clergy in the West, took no root beyond those areas where he had been most active. One can adduce several reasons for this. Unlike the great aristocratic bishops of Gaul, Martin was an outsider, a soldier (a déclassé profession in the eyes of Roman aristocrats), and above all a strange hybrid of a monk-bishop—an ascetic who nevertheless relentlessly involved himself in the activities of the world. North of the Loire and in the southeast of Gaul, Martin's form of monasticism seems to have held little attraction.

The ultimate popularity of this most unusual man was to a great extent the result of the image drawn of him by his biographer, Sulpicius Severus, an educated and refined follower who, in his account of Martin's life, presented him as the ideal of a new type of bishop—one who could be a great churchman pursuing the life of action traditionally associated with high Roman office and still be able to lead the life of self-renunciation characteristic of monastic observance. Gradually this tale of active and

contemplative life, rewritten in a classic of late Latin prose, attracted Aquitainian churchmen who sought more in religion than the daily routine of administrative tasks and the constant threat of political competition.

Still, the determining figure in the development of Martin's cult was not Sulpicius, the learned Aquitainian monk and aristocrat, but rather Clovis, the newly converted Frank. What he saw in Martin is not altogether clear—in large part he must have considered Martin a key ally in his victory over the Visigoths. Also, since Martin's cult was spreading slowly through the aristocracy of the same region where Clovis made his conquest, his special attention to Martin was a means of establishing strong ties with the leading figures of his newly acquired lands. It may even be that Martin, the Pannonian soldier who came to play such a leading role in Gaul, was a figure particularly attractive to Clovis. In spite of Sulpicius's coloring of his life, Martin was clearly not a great intellectual or man of letters like the majority of southern bishops Clovis must have encountered. Instead he was a man of action who knew the sources of real power and how to wield it. Clovis too was a relative outsider (who also perhaps considered himself of Pannonian origin, if the legend discussed earlier was already in currency) and a recent convert who was likewise making his way in Gaul. Thus Martin and Clovis had much in common.

In any event, Clovis's patronage transformed Martin from a patron of the Aquitainian bishops to the patron of the Frankish kingdom and the symbol of the new Frankish church. The cult, and with it the attempt to combine an active public life with the ascetic contemplative tradition, spread north to Paris, Chartres, Rouen, and Amiens; east to Trier, Strassburg, and Basel; west to Bayeaux, Avranches, and Le Mans, and south to Saintes, Angoulême, Limoges, and Bordeaux, to name but a few of the major cities where his cult flourished in the sixth century. In the following century, the cult of Saint Martin traveled with the expansion of the Frankish empire as far north as Utrecht and as far east as Linz.

The Aquitainian form of monasticism should not be seen as a systematic movement or even a group of monasteries following a

particular rule or group of rules. Rather it was a series of local initiatives often inspired by the example of Martin but not with any particular institutional connection with Marmoutier. In fact, little is known about the internal organization and discipline of these communities—a problem, as we shall see, for other, more formal monastic traditions.

The example of Martin attracted not only men but also women. However, while communities of men might spring up around a particularly impressive hermit, those of women tended to form around oratories and basilicas where were found the remains of saints to whom the religious felt particular devotion. Communities of women were generally in cities or in their immediate suburbs, where they could be supervised by the local bishop and protected from men. Bride theft was still a normal means of acquiring a wife, and aristocratic convents were convenient locations in which to find a suitable woman who could be stolen, raped, and then married for her inheritance.

The Rhône

The one region in which the cult of Martin barely penetrated was, with Aquitaine, the most profoundly Roman region of Francia—the Rhône watershed. Here developed almost simultaneously a parallel but different from of monasticism, much more aristocratic in its associations, more carefully disciplined, and more directly related to the Eastern monastic tradition. The two traditions and their adherents were wary of each other, and the differences and disagreements may have reflected not only different styles of monastic observance, but also important divisions in the late Gallo-Roman aristocracy of the West.

The first of the great Rhône monasteries, Lérins, was founded between 400 and 410 by Saint Honoratus, a member of a consular family from northern Gaul. As youths, he and his brother devoted themselves to the ascetic life and together undertook a pilgrimage to the East in order to experience Eastern monasticism. After his brother died on the Peloponnesus, Honoratus returned to Gaul and founded on the island of Lerinum a small monastery modeled on those he had known in the East.

At almost the same time that Honoratus was founding Lérins, John Cassian was founding the monastery of Saint Victor at nearby Marseille. Cassian had been a student of John Chrysostom in Constantinople and Pope Leo the Great in Rome, but his most formative experience was the fifteen years he spent among the anchorites in Syria and monastic communities in the Egyptian desert of Scete. Cassian thus imported Eastern monasticism directly into the West, both in the rigorous descriptions of monastic life and discipline in his *Institutes* and in the collection of the wisdom and sayings of the fathers of the Egyptian desert in his *Colloquies*. While the latter are hardly verbatim transcriptions of the Desert Fathers' teachings, they nevertheless record the spirit and vitality of Eastern monasticism and present it as a model to be followed in the West.

The Eastern monasticism introduced by Honoratus and Cassian arrived at exactly the right moment to provide a spiritual and cultural refuge for northern aristocrats displaced by the turbulence of the fifth century. The island monastery of Lérins became in particular a place of refuge for the northern Gallic aristocracy, who, like Honoratus himself, sought a refuge from the political and social upheavals of their homeland. The list of these refugees is long and illustrious: Saint Hilarius, a kinsman of Honoratus and later archbishop of Arles; Caesarius, from Chalon-sur-Saône, who also ended his life as archbishop of Arles; Salvian, who came to Marseille from Cologne or Trier; and Faustus, originally from Armorica, who was abbot at Lérins before becoming bishop of Riez, to name but a few.

Rhône monasticism, unlike that established by Martin, maintained a strongly aristocratic character. This elite tradition is evident in the quality of writing and theological polemic which came from it. Prior to their conversion, these monks had been thoroughly educated in the pagan rhetorical tradition, and although they came to Lérins to practice silence, isolation, abstinence, and prayer, they nevertheless continued to employ their intellectual talents. Thus unlike the monasteries of the Martin tradition, Lérins produced, or perhaps rather influenced, intellectuals. The most significant example of the ascetic influence exerted on fifth-century intellectuals by Lérins was the participa-

tion of at least two of its monks, Vincent of Lérins and Faustus of Riez, as well as Cassian himself, in the attack on Augustine's predestinarian teaching. These so-called semi-Pelagians, like other monks dedicated to the importance of the ascetic life and the value of self-mortification and self-control, could not accept as pessimistic a view of the human potential as that of the African bishop. To accept Augustine's resolution of the paradox of inevitability and responsibility seemed to them to destroy responsibility. Not only was Augustine's doctrine of predestination seen as a fatalistic, heretical solution to the problem of divine grace and free will, it was also new. Vincent of Lérins, attacking the novelty of Augustinian theology, formulated what would be the fundamental definition of orthodox consensus: Augustine's predestinarian teaching was unacceptable because it did not conform to what had been believed "everywhere, always, by all" (*ubique semper ab omnibus*).[28] This formulation exemplified a monastic intellectual firmly maintaining the cosmopolitan and universal culture of Christian Roman civilization.

This aristocratic character of Lérins was also clear in the nature of its attraction—it was a desert retreat, but a fruitful and pleasant one where displaced elites, dedicated to the life of the mind and to the pursuit of spiritual perfection, could find solace for a short period or for a lifetime. Upon their departure for the episcopacy, many, like Hilarius, Faustus, and Caesarius, went on to establish similar communities in their cities. Since most of these sees were to be found along the fluvial axis created by the Rhône and Saône, the Lérins model of monastery gradually filtered north to Arles, Lyon, Autun, St. Maurice d'Agaune, to the monasteries of the Jura region, and as far as Troyes.

Although the differences between the traditions of Martin and those of Lérins and Marseille were more of emphasis than content, they were nevertheless deeply felt through the sixth and even seventh centuries. Although little is known about the organization of Martin's monasteries, Rhône monasticism was apparently much closer to Eastern traditions in strictness. Aquitainian (Martin's) monasticism seems to have been more the result of improvisation; a holy man would appear, a group of followers would congregate, and the resulting community would live more

as a group of hermits than a regular monastic community. Cassian was aware of this loose form of monastic life and condemned it in his *Institutes* without mentioning Martin by name.

In fact, through the sixth century, proponents of the two traditions seem to have ignored each other, refraining from directly attacking the other tradition but also from mentioning its existence whenever possible. Thus Hilarius of Arles, Eucherius of Lyon, Vincentius of Lérins, Caesarius of Arles, and the other leading proponents of the Rhône monastic tradition never mention Saint Martin. Although in some regions deeply influenced by Lérins, such as the Jura monasteries where his *Life* by Sulpicius was read and venerated, he was simply not considered a part of the same monastic tradition from which Lérins and Marseille originated.

Similarly, Gregory of Tours, the great proponent of Martin's cult in the sixth century, has little to say about the Rhône tradition. In all his accounts of the bishops and saints of Gaul, he never once discusses Caesarius of Arles, Faustus of Riez, Honoratus, Hilarius, or Salvian. He mentions Lérins only in conjunction with the translation of the relics of Saint Hospitius; he says nothing about its ascetic tradition. The two worlds of Gallic monasicism remained divided camps.

And yet, the similarities were greater than the differences. Both had developed from Eastern monastic tradition around the same time. Both involved primarily the clergy. We have seen how closely the bishop was connected to the monastic and hermitic tradition praised by Gregory. In the Rhône area, monasticism was essentially an affair of aristocratic churchmen; it found its support within clerical society, not among the laity. For the most part, the latter remained neutral toward monasteries unless they desired to abandon the world for the cloister. Abbots, unless they left the monastery for an episcopal see, rarely cut an imposing figure in worldly society. Thus the two worlds did not penetrate each other.

During the course of the later fifth and sixth centuries, the two forms of monastic life began to blend. In particular, the more rigorous rules followed in the Rhône valley, such as strict subordination of monks to their abbots and the requirement that

monks remain in the location where they had taken their vows rather than traveling about founding new hermitages and cells, began to be demanded of all monks by episcopal synods. The Rhône valley model of monastic life appealed to councils much more than the ad hoc religious life followed in Aquitaine because it made it easier for bishops to control monks. Above all, whether in Aquitaine or the Rhône valley, monasticism was (or was supposed to be) firmly under the control of the bishop. This subordination was emphasized at the first Frankish council held in 511. Canon 19 stated emphatically that "By reason of religious humility, abbots are to remain under the authority of bishops and should they do anything contrary to [their] rule, they are to be corrected by the bishop."[29]

Bishops Against Monks

That this canon had to be repeated at subsequent synods during the sixth century suggests that, while bishops claimed and in theory abbots acknowledged, episcopal authority over religious communities, at times abbots (and abbesses) acted with considerable autonomy, much to the discomfiture of their bishops. Rebelliousness could have social and political origins, as in the case of the revolt in the monastery of the Holy Cross founded by Radagunda, wife of Chlothar I, in Poitiers.[30] After Radagunda's death, nuns who, like her, were of the royal family refused to accept her successor and staged a revolt. Some left the convent for marriage while others, with the assistance of their armed servants, beat up the bishops who came to negotiate with them. This case was, however, exceptional in every respect. The nuns in revolt were Merovingians; Radagunda's successor, Agnes, seems to have been one of the few members of the community not of royal parentage; the bishop of Poitiers, for unexplained reasons, had long refused to supervise the monastery. Such a situation could hardly have been typical.

More common and ominous was a different sort of disobedience. In his *Book in the Glory of the Confessors,* Gregory tells that when Bishop Agricola of Cavillon heard that Desideratus, a recluse living nearby in a religious community that had sprung

up around him, had died, the bishop immediately sent his archdeacon to obtain the body. The monks of the community refused
to surrender it.[31] Here indeed was a potential threat to the bedrock of episcopal power. Monastic communities, as we have seen,
tended to grow up either around a hermit known for his piety or
around a basilica or tomb of a reputed holy man. It was from
just such deceased holy persons that bishops could draw their
power, if they could control access to them. If sanctity could escape episcopal control in the West as it had done long before in
the East, the monopoly of religious and political authority of the
bishop, as well as that of his aristocratic Gallo-Roman kinsmen,
could be in jeopardy. This is precisely what happened in the seventh and eighth centuries.

In the face of real and potential threats to their position from
Frankish agents, rival families, disgruntled kinsmen, and freelance saints, bishops found support in solidarity. Perhaps in recognition of the precariousness of their existence, the bishops of
Francia were able to set aside their differences sufficiently to meet
in regular regional and national synods at which common problems might be discussed and remedies found. Also, we see them
acting as a group under their metropolitans to deal with problems too complex or too dangerous for any single bishop.

The factious episcopate of Francia can hardly be credited with
the initiative of calling national councils. These began in 511 at
the initiative of Clovis and continued to meet from time to time
at the initiative of the kings. Moreover many councils, including
the first, were not really attended by bishops from all of the
Frankish kingdom; they tended to be regional in scope, although
some, such as the Council of Orléans in 549, really did assemble
bishops or their representatives from the entire Frankish world.

The issues addressed at these assemblies were a combination of
ad hoc problems and more general questions facing the bishops
and the kingdom. Much of the legislation concerns episcopal collegiality and the protection of episcopal authority. Annual provincial synods were required in order to encourage "fraternity
and charity" among themselves. Bishops were protected from
each other, from their clergy, and from the interference of the
king.

A second vital area of concern was the discipline of the clergy. Whenever possible, the bishops sought to eliminate ambiguity and foster the sort of Christian asceticism in the secular or diocesan clergy that they admired in the regular or monastic clergy. Progressively, the traditions of Western religious and social practice were subordinated to Eastern ascetic ideals even while monastic communities were required to submit to strict episcopal supervision.

However, in the following century a fundamental challenge was raised to this corporate, episcopal control of the discipline and practice of Frankish religion by a new type of monasticism. It appeared on the Continent in the last years of the sixth century and would spread rapidly during the reigns of the two greatest Merovingians, Chlothar II and Dagobert I. Before considering this challenge, we must first look at Francia under these two great kings.

Francia
ABOUT 600
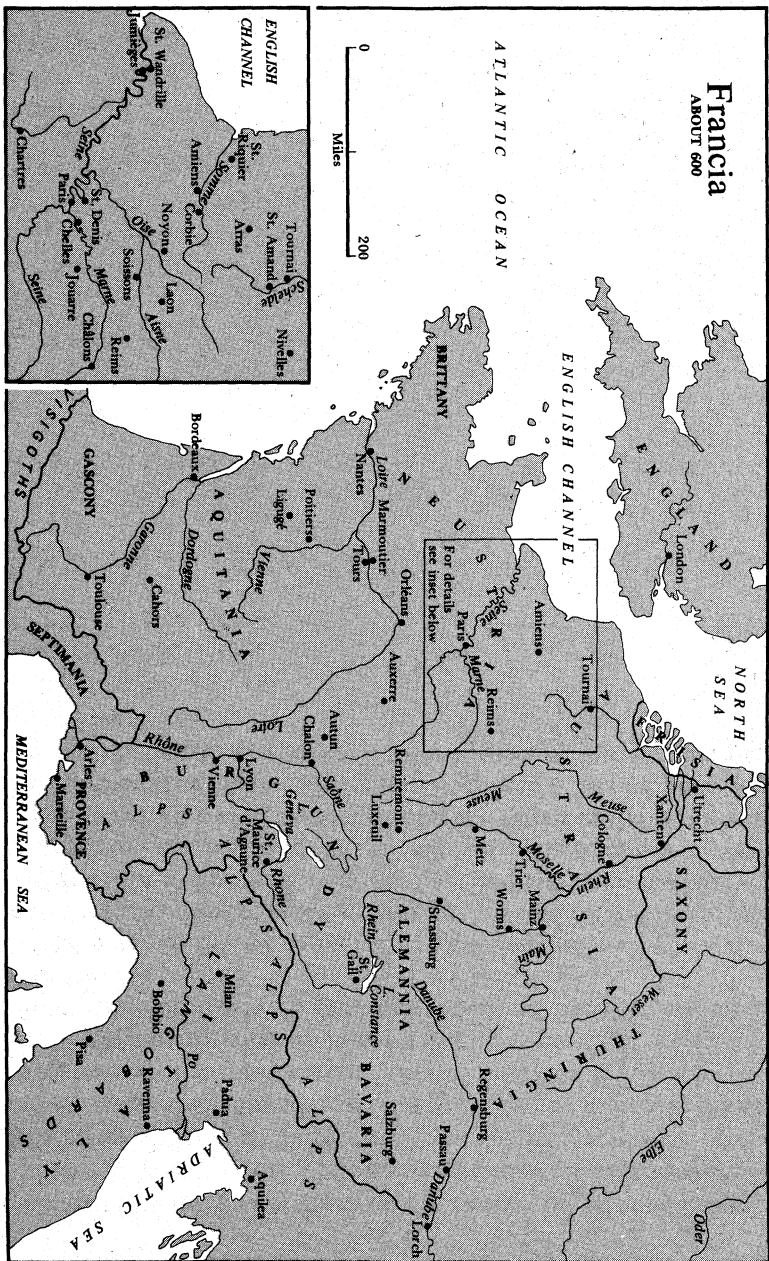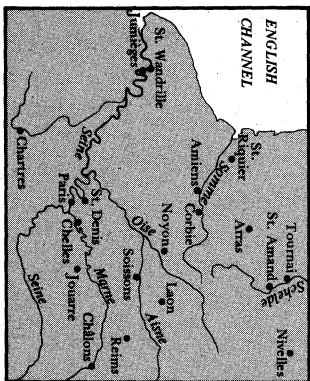
CHAPTER V

Francia under Chlothar II
and Dagobert I

Francia Reunited

> Brunechildis was brought before Chlothar who was boiling with fury against her. . . . She was tormented for three days with a diversity of tortures, and then on his orders was led through the ranks on a camel. Finally she was tied by her hair, one arm and one leg to the tail of an unbroken horse, and she was cut to shreds by its hoofs at the pace it went.[1]

The brutal humiliation and dismemberment of Brunechildis was the final dramatic act (613) in the consolidation of the Frankish subkingdoms under Chlothar II (reigned 584–629). The next twenty-five years of his reign and that of his son, Dagobert I (reigned 623–629 with his father, 629–639 alone) would be the most peaceful, prosperous, and significant period of Frankish history since the reign of Clovis. It would also be a period when the aristocratic forces that would ultimately destroy the Merovingian dynasty would come to a new self-awareness, quietly building and consolidating their strength.

Chlothar's victory had been made possible by the cooperation of the Burgundian and Austrasian aristocracy. Gunthchramn, the Burgundian king admired by Gregory, had died childless in 593 and his nephew Childebert II, son of Brunechildis and the Austrasian Sigibert I, acquired the kingdom. After Childebert's death in 596, Brunechildis attempted to control both Austrasia and Burgundy as guardian of her minor grandsons Theudebert II (reigned 596–612) and Theuderic II (reigned 596–613). Chlothar II attempted unsuccessfully to take advantage of their minority to absorb their kingdoms.

In 599 the Austrasian aristocracy, unhappy with her rule, expelled the old queen, who fled to the kingdom of her grandson Theuderic, where she was warmly received. The two brothers initially cooperated in their efforts to eliminate their Neustrian cousin Chlothar and were largely successful in absorbing a large portion of his kingdom. However tensions between the supporters of Brunechildis (largely the aristocracy in the more Romanized regions of the Burgundian kingdom) and her grandson Theuderic, and the Austrasians and Burgundian Franks reached the point that in 612 Theudebert attacked his brother's kingdom. The attack was a disaster, Theudebert was captured, incarcerated at Châlons-sur-Marne, and killed. Theuderic ordered that his infant nephew Merovich have his brains dashed out.

This union of the two kingdoms lasted only a few months. The Austrasian aristocracy, represented by Arnulf of Metz and Pippin of Herstal, invited Chlothar into the kingdom. Theuderic attempted to move against them but he died unexpectedly at Metz. Brunechildis tried to continue her control of Burgundy by making Sigibert, her great-grandson and the eldest son of Theuderic, king of the two regions, but Sigibert and his great-grandmother were betrayed by the Burgundian aristocracy into the hands of Chlothar. Sigibert and his brother Corbus were executed, his other brother, Merovich, the godson of Chlothar, was sent into exile in Neustria, and Brunechildis received the fate described above by the chronicler known as Fredegar.

Chlothar's victory had been a victory of the Austrasian and Burgundian aristocracies, and immediately following the execution of Brunechildis he took steps to confirm the position of those who had made his victory possible. Warnachar, the particular favorite of Theuderic II and Brunechildis, whose defection had made possible the capture of the latter, was immediately named *maior domus* in Burgundy for life—Chlothar swore a solemn oath that he would never remove him from office. In Austrasia Chlothar established as *maior domus* one Rado, who had probably played a similar role in that area.

Shortly after, in Paris, Chlothar issued a 24-article edict that in essence promised that the traditional rights of the aristocracy, the church, and the people would be respected.[2] Hardly novel,

these measures were intended to guarantee that abuses which had developed in the years of internal warfare and arbitrary governance by the Visigoth Brunechildis and her descendants would be corrected. It is ironic that, if much of the opposition to Brunechildis resulted from her attempts to reintroduce Roman fiscal traditions, the edict was probably prepared in response to petitions drawn up by southern bishops drawing on Roman and Visigothic legal tradition. Thus Chlothar promised that episcopal elections would be carried out by the clergy and the people, and that the person thus selected, if worthy, would be confirmed by the king; he forbade the practice of bishops naming their successors; he reaffirmed the authority of the bishop over his clergy; and he guaranteed that widows and virgins who had devoted themselves to a religious life either in monasteries or in their own homes could not be forced into marriage. Much of the edict concerned the administration of justice. Except in criminal matters, clerics were to be judged only by ecclesiastical courts; cases involving clerics and laymen were to be judged in the presence of an ecclesiastical provost and a public judge; neither freemen nor slaves could be punished or executed without judgment; Jews were not to pursue legal actions against Christians. Chlothar was also concerned with fiscal abuses. Wherever tax rolls had been unjustly raised, formal inquiries were to be made to correct them; no tolls were to be collected that did not date back to the reigns of Gunthchramn, Chilperic, and Sigibert; no royal tax collectors were to infringe on ecclesiastical or private immunities; the property of persons dying intestate was to go to their legitimate heirs and not the king.

Finally, the edict promised to respect the authority and traditions of local powers. In a famous chapter, Chlothar promised that "no judge [presumably royal official] from one province or region shall be appointed in another." Some have taken this as a major departure in royal policy, a guarantee of local autonomy which amounted to a surrender of royal authority to the interests of the local aristocracy. In reality it probably reflects what had by this time become traditional, appointing royal officers by much the same process as in the selection of bishops. Moreover, another chapter forbids lay and ecclesiastical magnates holding

estates in more than one region from appointing judges or
agents from outside the region. However, while the edict is not
the result of a constitutional revolution or the abandonment of
royal prerogative into the hands of the aristocracy, it explicitly
confirms the intensely local character of Francia. Governance,
meaning essentially the collection of taxes and maintenance of
justice among consenting freemen, was a local affair within the
civitas or *pagus* (that is, the administrative district surrounding
a town). No attempt, whether by the king, the church, or mag-
nates to introduce outsiders into this system would be tolerated.
As a result, the governance of the three regions of Francia, al-
though united under Chlothar, would not be centralized. Instead,
each would continue to preserve its own regional power bases
and, to an extent, its institutions under Chlothar and his suc-
cessor Dagobert, whom he associated in his reign in 623, placing
him over Austrasia, and who succeeded him in 629 as king of
all of Francia. In the course of the seventh century this particu-
larity became even more accented as other regions, such as Ba-
varia, Thuringia, Frisia, Aquitaine, and Provence, traditionally
either divided among the three central kingdoms (as in the
cases of Aquitaine and Provence) or controlled by Austrasia, de-
veloped into virtually autonomous subkingdoms.

The Regions of Francia

In the wake of the aristocratic-royal cooperation that reunited
the kingdoms, the role of royal advisors within each of the re-
gions of Francia became extremely important since they largely
determined the extent of royal influence. In Burgundy, where
royal officers in the days of Brunechildis had been instruments
of royal control, the aristocracy, badly split among the more
western "Franks" and the Rhône "Romano-Burgundians," had
little interest in seeing a strong central government under a
maior domus. When Warnachar died in 626/27, the Burgundian
aristocracy informed Chlothar that they did not wish any new
appointment to be made but that they be allowed to deal di-
rectly with the king. This is to say, in all likelihood, that they
chose to be ruled directly by themselves. In particular, the more

southern region, corresponding most closely to the old Burgundian kingdom, continued to develop separatist tendencies centered around powerful aristocratic families through the remainder of the century.

The extent to which these autonomous tendencies had progressed in less than fifteen years can be judged by the account of Dagobert's judicial visit to Burgundy in 628. According to the chronicle of Fredegar, "The profound alarm that his coming caused among the Burgundian bishops, magnates, and others of consequence was a source of general wonder; but his justice brought great joy to the poor."[3] The presence of the king making his way across Burgundy, administering justice and righting wrongs, certainly had a great effect, but it was only temporary. Local magnates were constantly attempting to strengthen their own local power base and escape royal control. When the *maior domus* Warnachar died in 626, his son Godinus attempted to consolidate the regional power his father had created through marriage alliances by taking the extraordinary step of marrying his father's widow, his stepmother Bertha. Chlothar was so displeased that he had him killed. Later Brodulf, the uncle of Dagobert's half brother Charibert II, whom Chlothar had given only a border kingdom in Aquitaine, became a major source of trouble in Burgundy for Chlothar. Brodulf presumably intended to establish his son-in-law on the throne. Before leaving Burgundy in 628 Dagobert ordered Brodulf's execution. However the king could not always be in Burgundy, and in his absence autonomous tendencies were bound to develop once more.

In Austrasia, which had experienced almost a century of fairly unified governance under Sigibert I and his successors, the aristocracy sought to protect itself through different means. There, Chlothar was pressured to reestablish the kingship under his son Dagobert. Moreover, when Chlothar attempted to reduce the size of the Austrasian kingdom by detaching the Austrasian section of Aquitaine and the area west of the Ardennes and the Vosges, this effort was blocked. When Dagobert protested the division, a group of twelve arbiters were selected to settle the disagreement. Since the most important of these was Arnulf of Metz who, along with Pippin of Herstal was the most powerful

representative of the Austrasian aristocracy, it was no surprise
that Dagobert was able to retain all of the territory north of the
Loire which had previously been part of Austrasia.

This then was the strategy for the preservation of aristocratic
control in Austrasia. The region was to remain centralized with
its own court, but the whole was to be controlled by Pippin and
Arnulf, who had invited Chlothar to enter the kingdom in 613.
Later, when Arnulf left the court he was replaced by another
Austrasian, Bishop Cunibert of Cologne. The extent of their
power was such that they could even force the king to eliminate
their rivals, such as Chrodoald, a leading member of the power-
ful Agilolfing clan whose power spread across Austrasia and into
Bavaria and probably Lombardy.

After Dagobert succeeded his father and moved his center of
activities to Paris in 629, the influence of the Austrasians on him
waned somewhat. Only Pippin stayed with him, but he too fell
from favor and his presence in Neustria may have been in part
because Dagobert wanted to keep an eye on him. However the
strategic position of Austrasia prevented him from ignoring it or
alienating its aristocracy. Frankish reversals against the Slavic
Wends, led by their Frankish king Samo in 631–633, pressured
him to reestablish a reduced Austrasian kingdom and to place
at its head his two-year-old son Sigibert. As his tutor, Dagobert
appointed an opponent of Arnulf and Pippin, Otto, son of the
domesticus Urso. But the real power in the kingdom was shared
by Bishop Cunibert of Cologne, a close friend of Pippin, and
the Duke Adalgisil, who was almost certainly a member of the
Arnulfing clan. Thus, despite the king's efforts to the contrary,
the Austrasian aristocracy remained in control. This control was
consolidated by the alliance of the two leading Austrasian clans
with the marriage of Arnulf's son Ansegisel and Pippin's daugh-
ter Begga. The new family, termed the Arnulfings or Pippinids,
would in time produce the next royal dynasty, the Carolingians.

Neustria had been the center of Chlothar's kingdom, and
after 629 Dagobert made it his center as well. Here were found
the largest amounts of fiscal land, the important cities of Paris,
Soissons, Beauvais, Vermand-Noyon, Amiens, and Rouen, as
well as the richest Frankish monasteries. Paris became increas-

ingly the primary royal residence and the center of royal religi-
ous and political ideology. The great royal monasteries of St.-
Germain-des-Prés and St.-Denis were found just outside the city,
and the latter in particular became, under Dagobert, the center
of royal cult. Dagobert richly endowed St.-Denis, raised its pa-
tron to a position of royal saint equal to that of Saint Martin,
and initiated its tradition as the royal burial site, a role it played
until the French Revolution.

Beyond the three central Frankish regions, control of the
Frankish empire varied enormously. In Aquitaine, Chlothar had
established his son Charibert, described as "simple-minded" by
the chronicler Pseudo-Fredegar, at the head of a border kingdom.
The establishment of the Aquitainian kingdom, like that of Aus-
trasia, was a response to external threats, in this case that of
the Gascons or Basques. The Aquitainian kingdom maintained
the peace until Charibert's death in 632, but shortly after the
Basques again began to menace the region. Dagobert ordered a
Burgundian army to occupy and pacify the region, but it met
with only partial success. On its return, the contingent led by
Duke Arnebert was ambushed in the valley of the Soule and
destroyed by the Basques—a defeat which may have created the
legend that over a century later would be modified to fit a simi-
lar defeat by a Frankish army at Roncevaux, this time under
the command of Count Roland.

Dagobert's reverses in Aquitaine were paralleled in Thurin-
gia and in his Slavic campaigns. The Wends had been united
by Samo, a Frank who, although described as a merchant, may
well have been a Frankish agent sent to organize the Slavic
Wends against the Avars, a steppe people who had replaced the
Huns in Pannonia and were menacing not only the Byzantine
Empire but Italy and Francia. He met with extraordinary suc-
cess organizing the Slavs and protecting them from the Avars
and was made their king, a position he held for some thirty-five
years. His kingdom stretched from Bohemia to Carinthia and
soon threatened the Frankish zone of influence in Thuringia.
Dagobert's attempt to crush them ended in failure, largely be-
cause of Austrasian duplicity. As we have seen, this Slavic threat
led to the reestablishment of the Austrasian kingdom.

In Thuringia similar problems developed after the reestablishment of the Austrasian kingdom and the appointment of the Austrasian Radulf as duke. Radulf was successful in defending Thuringia against the Wends, but in the process he developed Thuringia into a virtually autonomous kingdom. Later, after Dagobert's death, he successfully revolted against Sigibert and, after defeating the latter, he went so far as to term himself "King in Thuringia," a bad omen for the future of the Merovingian family.[4]

The distant Bavarian duchy created at the end of the sixth century took shape around the region of the old Roman city of Ratisbonna, Regensburg. It spread gradually down the Danube and south into the Alps, filling the vacuum created by the retreat of the Langobards into Italy and the Franks back into Austrasia, and incorporated the various Roman and barbarian peoples in this mountainous region. The threat posed to the duchy by the Avars, Slavs, and Bulgars had kept Bavaria and its Agilolfing dukes closely dependent on the Frankish king. Around 630 an order of Dagobert, made on the advice of his Frankish aristocrats, that Bulgar exiles wintering in Bavaria be slaughtered, was sufficient to see 700 men, women, and children murdered in their sleep by their Bavarian hosts in the course of one night. However, the Agilolfings were too wary to depend entirely on Dagobert. The death of their kinsman Chrodoald at the instigation of Pippin was evidence of the potential for opposition at court. Thus they developed both Avar and Langobard connections and in the course of the seventh century married extensively into the royal house of the latter. Although they did not go as far as Radulf and call themselves kings, their neighbors, the Langobards, did not hesitate to so designate them. Paul the Deacon, the eighth-century Langobard historian, wrote that in 593 Tassilo had been ordained king in Bavaria by Childebert.

The Royal Court

Chlothar and Dagobert could not hope to control effectively the entire Frankish kingdom by sending central agents to fill positions of authority in each region. Instead they sought to

bring together members of regional elites in their Paris court, where they could be watched, but also educated and indoctrinated into their political and cultural views. By selecting the best and most capable of these for ecclesiastical and secular posts in their home territories, they could then return them, fulfilling their promise to name local men to important positions and still insuring that they would have people in vital offices who could work with the king.

For their part, members of local aristocratic families saw the court as a place to which to send sons and daughters for education, to make contacts, and to secure for their families the kinds of positions needed to perpetuate their family goals. Thus the Neustrian court was a major cultural center for Francia, where young Gallo-Roman aristocrats from Aquitaine, such as Desiderius, the future bishop of Cahors, and Eligius, an aristocrat from Limoges who later became Dagobert's treasurer and bishop of Noyon, formed friendships with northern counterparts such as Audoenus (known as Saint Ouen, Audoin, or Dado), later referendary under Dagobert and bishop of Rouen. Also it was a place where marriages might be arranged, as that between the young Austrasian noble Adalbald from Ostrewant and Rictrudis, a Gallo-Roman from Aquitaine. From even as far away as Northumbria, King Edwin sent his two sons to be raised in Dagobert's court.

The court served a variety of educational roles. Young men of good family had already begun their educations when they arrived, around the age of puberty, and entered the household of the king, possibly even attaching themselves to him by a special oath. It appears that they were raised along with the royal children under the control of the royal tutor or the *maior domus*. Their education probably involved both military training for young men destined for secular office and training in rhetoric and notarial procedure for those likely to enter the royal chancellery. However, the young aristocrats were not simply at court to learn how to become bureaucrats; they were there to develop and continue the complex network of friends, patrons, and royal proximity which could sustain and enrich their families.

The most complete image of how such a cultural, social, and political network developed at the court can be derived from examining the life and correspondence of Bishop Desiderius. He was the son of Salvius and Herchenefreda, both members of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy from Albi. He was one of five children, each of whom carried a Roman name with deep resonances in senatorial tradition—Rusticus, Siagrius, Selina, Avita. First his elder brother Rusticus was drawn to the court of Chlothar, where he served as chaplain and archdeacon before being appointed by the king to the see of Cahors. His second brother Siagrius also went to the Neustrian court where he entered the household of Chlothar, later returning to Albi as count of the city. Ultimately he was appointed patricius of Provence, the Provençal equivalent of duke.

Desiderius too, after studying rhetoric and law, was drawn to court, where he served as treasurer. Here his associates included some of the most important and influential people of the seventh century—the future bishop Paul, of Verdun, Abbo of Metz, Eligius of Noyon, and Audoenus of Rouen. Court life offered a variety of possibilities. The court of Clothar and Dagobert was coming increasingly under clerical influence; bishop courtiers such as Eligius and Audoenus had much more influence than had been common in the sixth century, and a new monastic culture, which we shall examine below, was taking deep root in the Frankish aristocracy at court as well as in the provinces. But the court also offered all of the opportunities for dissipation and seduction that have characterized royal courts everywhere. Particularly after Dagobert set aside his first queen, the childless Gomatrudis, and married Nantechildis around 629, if one can believe the rather hostile Pseudo-Fredegar, the court became notorious for debauchery and, as the king aged and it became increasingly clear that following his death there would be a new division of the kingdom and long minorities, a center of intrigue. Desiderius's mother was certainly aware of its repution. In her extant letters to her son during this period she urges him to avoid both the dangers of court politics and of moral temptations: "Keep charity toward all," she advised, "be cautious in your speech, and above all, preserve your chastity."[5]

Desiderius followed her advice and in 630, after his brother Rusticus had been assassinated, Dagobert appointed him to the see of Cahors and Rusticus's successor. This career pattern was increasingly typical of the early seventh century. In the past it had not been unusual for members of the royal household to be appointed bishops, but now it was quite common. Apparently Dagobert reserved to himself, rather than to his half brother or, later, to his son, the right to appoint or approve bishops for the entire kingdom—a means of maintaining a hold even in Austrasia and southern Aquitaine.

In Cahors, Desiderius served the king in the twin capacities customary for seventh-century bishops—his biographer takes great pains to describe the ecclesiastical building program he undertook, but also praised him for his work constructing fortifications. Not only did he repair the city walls but even constructed towers and fortified gates. He also established a monastery in Cahors, the first in the city, according to his biographer, in which he chose to be buried. In addition, he maintained close contact with the elite group with whom he had been educated and with whom he had served at court. In his extant correspondence one finds letters not only to or from his metropolitan and other bishops in Aquitaine but also, among others, Dagobert, Sigibert III, Grimoald, the *maior domus* in Austrasia, Chlodulf, apparently the son of Arnulf of Metz, Bishop Medoald of Trier, Abbo of Metz, Audoenus of Rouen, Paul of Verdun, Felix of Limoges, Eligius of Noyon, and Palladius of Auxerre. Clearly these wide connections were the result of his years at court and his continuing role in the kingdom. In two letters, one to Abbo of Metz and the other to Audoenus of Rouen, he recalls with fondness the happy days together as companions in the court of Chlothar.

We know quite a lot about Desiderius and his fellow episcopal alumni of the royal court because of their correspondence and the lives composed after their deaths. Much less is known about the secular officers also raised at court, although one can infer that a similar and interconnected network developed among them. Some, like Desiderius's brother Siagrius, were returned to their own regions as counts. Others, like Radulf, were sent as

dukes to border regions of Francia where they may have already had, or soon developed, strong local ties. Still others, such as the Austrasian Adalbald who married the Aquitainian Rictrudis, were apparently married to women from sensitive regions in order to create the local connections necessary for effective functioning. Such efforts were often met with resistance, Adalbald was murdered at the instigation of his brothers-in-law. However it appears that during the first quarter of the seventh century numerous Austrasian and Neustrian aristocratic clans established ties in Aquitaine, Provence, Burgundy, and the regions east of the Rhine due to the court policies of the kings, while a corresponding number of Aquitainians, in this case primarily bishops, were established in northern sees.

The court during the reign of Chlothar and Dagobert thus played an essential role in the continuance of royal authority by drawing in, training, and then sending out capable administrators. Although less visible, two other developments were taking place during these decades which would have equally important effects on subsequent European history. The first was the development of the bipartite manor, which became the model for later medieval agriculture; the other, economically facilitated by the first, was the Christianization of royal tradition.

Royal Estates

The imperial fisc confiscated by Clovis in the north of Gaul had always formed the heart of Merovingian wealth. Largely for this reason, in the division of the kingdom that followed his death, each of his sons had received capitals relatively close together between the Rhine and the Loire. The *civitas* of Paris was probably at least three-fourths entirely fiscal land, the most important of which were Chelles, Rueil, and Clichy; at Soissons the vast fiscal lands centered on Bonneuil-sur-Marne, Compiègne, and Nogent-sur-Marne; on the lower Seine fiscal estates were found at Etrépagny, the forest of Bretonne, and on the sites that became the monasteries of Jumièges and St. Wandrille; the most important royal estates around Amiens were centered on the villa Crécy-en-Ponthieu.

These vast royal property holdings underwent continual transformation through the Merovingian period. Portions were given away to important magnates, and others became the sites of major monasteries. However, they had certain characteristics lacking in other areas and in estates held by individuals. First were the physical and demographic characteristics of the region. The soil of this gently rolling area was essentially of two types. The first was sandy uplands that could be worked easily and lent itself to exploitation by individual peasant families, and the second, heavy, rich lowlands that could be better exploited by groups of laborers using heavier, more expensive tools such as the heavy plough. After the abandonment of the classic Roman villas, which we discussed earlier, the region experienced fairly dense Frankish settlement, which resulted in widespread deforestation from the beginning of the sixth century and a progressive abandonment of animal husbandry in favor of farming.

Moreover, because much of this land remained in the royal fisc, it did not figure in the frequent dismemberment of estates that characterized private allodial landholding by the aristocracy, who engaged constantly in the purchase, sale, and exchange of land, and whose death normally meant the division of their lands among heirs. Also, because it was fiscal land, obligations of the peasants working it, whether free or slave, differed somewhat from those on private estates. In particular, individual holders of farms were obligated to considerable amounts of work on the portion of the estate held in reserve for the direct benefit of the king.

As a result, during the reigns of Chlothar and Dagobert probably a slow process began that resulted in the sort of manor which typified agrarian organization of the high Middle Ages. Its structure was essentially bipartite. On the one hand portions were divided into individual peasant holdings, manses (a term which first becomes common in the first half of the seventh century), which were worked in return for a fixed rent. These manses were apparently often created in the course of deforestation and settled by freemen attached to the fisc or by slaves established as unfree tenant farmers. On the other hand, a considerable portion of the estate formed the reserve, and although

in the seventh century this reserve was still largely worked by gang slaves, peasants holding manses were required to perform a fixed amount of work on the domain or reserve, the profits of which went directly to the king.

Because these estates were part of the fisc, the late Roman tax system, which had become privatized and absorbed into the estate management of magnates, survived longer here as a public, or at least royal, system. The continuity of property holding made possible continued record-keeping and planning, and because these estates were fiscal, no bishops or local magnates were able to stand between royal agents and the peasants to demand a reduction in payments or even, as happened in the sixth century, the destruction of the tax rolls.

Such estates must have been quite profitable and formed an important source of royal wealth with which to support the court and finance the building programs and displays of royal status and largesse required of the kings. Gradually, the model spread out across Francia, penetrating most readily into those regions such as Burgundy, Austrasia, and even distant Bavaria, where soil conditions, population, and availability of fiscal land made it profitable, and less readily into the south where older, Gallo-Roman traditions and a different type of agriculture proved more resistant to restructuring.

Not only the form of estate organization but the estates themselves were coveted by the aristocracy as rewards for service and churches as rewards for intercessory prayers. Although the kings were obligated to show their generosity by granting estates to petitioners, in general they seem to have avoided distributing fiscal property to laymen whenever possible. Thus, while we hear of generous donations of land to various aristocrats, particularly to those who had supported Chlothar against Brunechildis, most of these estates had been confiscated from opponents. Nevertheless kings were obligated to grant fiscal estates, and normally with these grants, solemnized by guarantees of immunity, went the same rights over the dependents and the incomes which had been enjoyed by the king. The long-term effects of such grants, both in terms of royal income, since the

taxes went to the owner, and in terms of the erosion of royal power, were ominous.

Chlothar and especially Dagobert were, on the other hand, much more generous in the distribution of fiscal property to the church. This was an old tradition. Clovis had endowed the church of St.-Geneviève, where he was buried, and Childebert I had founded St.-Germain-des-Prés, all on fiscal land. Chlothar and especially Dagobert were particularly interested in St.-Denis, which stood near their favorite villa of Clichy. Dagobert granted the monastery not only confiscations such as those taken from the rebel Aquitainian duke Sadregisel, but also important elements of the fisc from around Paris and from as far away as the Limousin, Le Mans, and Provence.

This dissemination of royal property served specific purposes for Dagobert. In time however, it had an unanticipated, twofold effect. In the long run, it weakened the monarchy in relationship to aristocrats who had either been the recipients of these estates or who had managed to take control of the monasteries which had been so favored by the kings. However, it also helped diffuse the bipartite estate model beyond the confines of the Parisian basin and the royal fisc until, by the late eighth century, it had become the primary model for estate structure.

Neither effect was in Dagobert's mind, however, when he made his grants to St.-Denis and other ecclesiastical institutions. His particular goals were religious and monarchical—he was wedding the royal tradition to a specific form of Christianity, with the intention of strengthening both.

Christianization of Royal Tradition

Frankish kings had had a close working relationship with the churches of their kingdom for over a century. However, under Dagobert this relationship became more systematic, explicit, and far-reaching. Royal interest lay in the development and appointment of bishops like Desiderius whose personal loyalty was unquestioned. But this was only part of the reason for the close relationship between monarch and church; it is anachronistic

to suggest that Dagobert was attempting to create a Frankish episcopate as a protection against the lay aristocracy. He was extremely concerned with the spiritual protection of his kingdom and with the firm foundation, the *stabilitas,* which a well-supported church could provide.

Two paths led to this *stabilitas.* First, as Dagobert stated in the introductory harangue of his letter announcing the appointment of Desiderius as bishop of Cahors, "our election and disposition ought to conform in all things with the will of God."[6] This obligation to God comes from the fact that the king's "territories and kingdoms are known to have been given into our power to be governed by the generosity of God." This formula is neither original nor an acknowledgment that Dagobert is king "by the grace of God," a phrase which was later used by the Carolingians, but it is an acknowledgment of the royal dependence on God and the duty that this dependence requires.

This obligation meant appointing God-fearing men such as Desiderius to ecclesiastical and secular office and governing with justice. We have seen both of these concerns translated into action. Whatever their political and social ties, the bishops raised at the royal court and distributed by Dagobert throughout the kingdom stand out as particularly capable and, by the standards of their time, worthy churchmen. Dagobert's concern with justice was seen not only in such royal judicial visits as that which threw Burgundy into consternation in 629, but also in the codification of the laws of the Ripuarian Franks, the Alemanni, and possibly the Bavarians. Unlike the Salic and Burgundian laws, these later codes are not simply records of traditional law drawn up by Roman jurists at the command of the local king. Instead they are imposed laws, the first code having been drawn up for the small Austrasian kingdom ruled by Dagobert's son Sigibert, and the other two Frankish products imposed by a Merovingian king through his appointed dukes.

The second route to *stabilitas* led through almsgiving, and particularly generosity to monasteries. Pseudo-Fredegar, who disapproved of much in Dagobert's later career, nevertheless acknowledged his generosity. He suggested that, had he been even more generous, he might have saved his soul:

> he had once been prodigal in his almsgiving; and had this earlier
> wise almsgiving not foundered through the promptings of cupidity,
> he would indeed in the end have merited the eternal kingdom.[7]

In reality, Dagobert was exceedingly prodigal in his almsgiving, and even as he lay dying asked that his son confirm his last donations to St.-Denis. We have mentioned this special generosity to St.-Denis before—it was a hallmark of Dagobert's reign. Not only did he endow it with enormous amounts of land and grant it immunity from royal officials, but he gave it great amounts of gold, gems, and precious objects. According to tradition he also established at the monastery the great October fair, which for centuries was a major source of income. And finally he chose St.-Denis as his final resting place.

This generosity was not to be a one-way process. In return Dagobert expected the spiritual assistance of the monks. In particular he established at St.-Denis the liturgical tradition of the *laus perennis,* the perpetual chant on the model of St.-Maurice d'Agaure in which monastic choir followed monastic choir so that at all hours of the day and night prayers were offered to God for the king, his family, and his kingdom. Dagobert took his responsibilities seriously, and he expected his favorite monastery to do the same.

Creation of the Aristocratic Tradition

We don't know what sort of rule the monks at St.-Denis followed in the time of Dagobert. Presumably it was something on the order of the tradition of Saint Martin. After his death, Dagobert's son imposed on the monastery the so-called mixed Benedictine and Columbanian rule. This form of monasticism, increasingly important in the seventh century, was part of a religious and social transformation which in time profoundly restructured the Frankish world and tilted the balance of power away from Merovingian kings and bishops toward Frankish aristocrats and monks.

The aristocratic Frankish kindreds which had developed their independence and force during the troubled last years of the sixth century were not, as was once believed, a new creation.

We have seen that a Frankish aristocracy had existed before
Clovis and continued to play an important role under his suc-
cessors. However, unlike the Gallo-Roman aristocracy, which
not only had a strong political and social base but also a religi-
ous role as the chief proponents (and monopolizers) of high
office in orthodox Christianity, the Frankish aristocracy had no
religious role in society after the conversion of the Franks. True,
its members may well have continued to enjoy prestige for their
utilitas, that is, their military skill and political acumen, and
in a society not fully Christianized something may have re-
mained of their earlier religious importance. Indeed, Eligius of
Noyon encountered near Noyon kinsmen of the Neustrian *maior
domus* Erchinoald, who were presiding over summer celebrations
including games and dancing which he, at least, considered
pagan rituals and which they considered part of the customs
handed down from time immemorial.[8] However, with the con-
version of Clovis, the aristocracy rapidly became Christian, at
least to the extent of acknowledging Christ as the most powerful
victory-giving god and of demanding the performance of Chris-
tian rituals to assure their well-being and that of their families.

However, prior to the last quarter of the sixth century, no
means of direct involvement in the growing Christian cult was
readily available to the Frankish aristocracy. To become a bishop
meant to adopt the cultural and social traditions of the sena-
torial aristocracy of the south, and while this was done by some
Frankish families in the sixth century, it was rare. To become
a monk was likewise unusual for a Frankish noble. As we have
seen, monasteries were largely episcopal foundations, supported
and closely controlled by them. True, Lérins offered aristocrats
a type of monastic existence, but this was once more a Roman cul-
tural and religious tradition attracting mostly aristocratic clerics
who had already chosen the religious life. The more northern
aristocrats had little involvement in such monasteries that were
deeply rooted in Gallo-Roman cultural tradition and firmly su-
pervised by the bishops recruited from the old elite. All this
began to change with the introduction of a figure as extraordi-
nary and as alien to sixth-century Gaul as Martin had been to
that of the fourth—the Irish monk Columbanus.

Columbanus

Irish society and the form of Christianity which it developed
were radically different from anything known on the Continent.
Alone of all the regions of the West which converted readily
to the new religion, Ireland had never formed part of the Ro-
man Empire. It remained an isolated and archaic Celtic society.
It was, in a very technical sense, uncivilized, that is, the city,
that primary element of classical social and cultural organiza-
tion, was completely unknown prior to the Viking raids that
would begin in the eighth century. Moreover, it was radically
decentralized, being organized into petty kingdoms or tribes
which were in turn composed of kindreds called septs, the equiv-
alent of the Germanic *Sippe*.

Just when Christianity first reached Ireland is much disputed,
but linguistic evidence indicates that some Irish were Christian
already in the late fourth or early fifth century. Nevertheless
there existed no bishops or diocesan organization prior to the
first half of the fifth century, when first Bishop Palladius and
then shortly after Patrick arrived and began to organize a church
modeled on the Gallic church they had known on the Continent.
However, while Patrick's system won support in the north, else-
where in Ireland, the older, pre-episcopal form of Christian life
continued, and after his death much of his administrative or-
ganization disappeared even in those areas where he had been
most successful. Lacking the tradition of Roman cities and pro-
vincial organization, Ireland was hardly an ideal area for the
development of an episcopal church, and in the sixth century
the Irish church became a federation of monastic communities,
each corresponding roughly to a tribe and each under the juris-
diction of the "heir" of the founding saint of the region.

These monasteries owed much to the Eastern monastic tradi-
tion probably introduced into Ireland via Lérins but radically
altered to conform with Irish culture. Their administration was
firmly under the control of the abbot, a hereditary office within
the ruling sept. When new monasteries were founded by mem-
bers of existing monasteries, they remained under the authority
of the abbot of the original foundation. Within the monastery

was often found a bishop, but his function was liturgical and cultic, not administrative. Unlike monasteries on the Continent, which were communities of men or women determined to escape the world, these Irish monasteries were the centers of Christian life and the primary religious institutions around which lay religious practice focused and on which it was modeled. They were also centers of considerable Latin letters and learning, if of a fairly esoteric sort, in part since the Latin language in Ireland was entirely divorced from that of daily life. More importantly, they were also extremely rigorous centers of ascetic practice, some cenobitic, others consisting of cells of solitaries.

A primary characteristic of Irish monasticism was the predilection of its monks for traveling abroad. This was not pilgrimage in the more modern sense of a journey to a specific shrine and back, but rather an attempt to live out the image of the Christian life as a journey in an alien land between birth and death. Thus many Irish monks set out to separate themselves from all that was familiar and, either alone or with a few companions, traveled to Scotland, Iceland, and the Continent, not with a goal of conducting missionary work but simply of living as a monastic pilgrim among an alien people. Of these pilgrims who reached the Continent, the most important was Columbanus, who arrived in Gaul from Scotland around 590.

Columbanus and his companions made their way to the court of Gunthchramn of Burgundy, the king most admired by Gregory of Tours, who received them well and allowed them to establish themselves in a ruined fortress at Annegray in the Vosges mountains. Their peculiarly rigorous lifestyle attracted a large following, and Columbanus soon obtained from Gunthchramn another ruin, where he established the monastery of Luxeuil. Not long after, he added a third at Fontaines. For twenty years he remained in Burgundy, but in time the increasing popularity of his form of monastic life and observance created antagonism within the episcopacy. Some of these objections were based on the forms of ritual observance practiced in his communities, and in particular the fact that he celebrated Easter according to the Irish, rather than the Continental, calendar. More important was the relationship between his communities and the epis-

copacy. Gallic monasteries were supposed to be strictly subordinate to the local bishop. However, in the Irish tradition, Columbanus controlled his monasteries and wanted only to be left in peace by the Burgundian bishops. Instead of bowing to episcopal authority, he appealed to Pope Gregory the Great (pope 590–604) in Rome to be allowed to continue unhindered in his Celtic tradition, a step virtually unheard of in Gaul. Gregory, however, died before the appeal reached him.

Before the dispute could be resolved, Columbanus ran afoul of Queen Brunechildis and her son Theuderic, whose polygyny he had had the audacity to attack directly. Ultimately he was expelled from the kingdom and made his way to the Neustrian court of Chilperic. Here he was extremely well received, as he was in the Austrasian kingdom of Theudebert. He traveled into Alemannia, where he found some remnants of Christian observance mixed with local polytheism and established a new community at Bregenz on Lake Constance. However local opposition drove him over the Alps into the Langobard kingdom, where King Agilulf received him and granted him a site for a new monastery at Bobbio between Milan and Genoa, where he established his final monastery. After Chlothar's victory over Brunechildis, the king invited him to return to Luxeuil, but by then he was too old and thus remained in Bobbio until his death in 615.

A Christian Frankish Aristocracy

The impact of Columbanus on the Frankish aristocracy can scarcely be overestimated. Here was a form of rigorous and fearless Christianity which was not an expression of Gallo-Roman culture and was not a creature of the episcopacy. Moreover, it was propagated by a saint who did not cut himself off from the secular world but who maintained close connections with powerful families across the north of Francia. These connections were particularly strong in Neustria among the court aristocracy and can be traced in the account of the life of Columbanus written by Jonas, a native of Susa and monk in Bobbio under the founder's immediate successor. In fact, Co-

lumbanus and his monastic tradition provided the common
ground around which networks of northern aristocrats could
unite, finding a religious basis for their social and political
standing.

The list of aristocrats influenced by Columbanus reads like a
Who's Who of the Frankish aristocracy. For example, Colum-
banus was well received near the valley of the Marne by Agneric,
who had been close to Theudebert and after the death of the
latter joined the group of Austrasians favorable to Chlothar II.
His son, Burgundofaro, became the referendary of Dagobert and
later a bishop; his daughter, Burgundofara, became an abbess.
In the same region Columbanus was also received by Autharius
and his three sons Audo, Audoenus (Dado), and Rado, the first
of whom later founded his own monastery of Jouarre. The sec-
ond, who founded a monastery at Rebais, became a referendary
under Dagobert, and finally ended his life as bishop of Rouen.
In Austrasia Columbanus was in contact with the supporters of
Chlothar II, especially with Romaricus, who later went to
Luxeuil and then founded Remiremont, which became a major
aristocracy monastery in the next centuries. Bertulf, a kinsman
of Arnulf of Metz, entered Luxeuil and later followed Colum-
banus to Bobbio, where he eventually became abbot. In Bur-
gundy Columbanus's strongest contacts were with the family of
the dux Waldelenus, whose kin were found as far south as
Provence and east to Susa. Two of this kindred, Eustathius and
Waldebert, in time became abbots of Luxeuil.

All of these Frankish families shared certain common traits.
First, all had one or more members who were strongly attracted
to this new monasticism and either visited or entered Luxeuil as
monks. Second, they founded monasteries themselves on family
property. These monasteries followed in general the rule which
Columbanus had prepared for his Burgundian monasteries, al-
though in the course of the seventh century this rule was merged
with that of Benedict, which began to influence Frankish monas-
ticism, resulting in what is called the Iro-Frankish monastic
tradition. This mixed rule preserved much of the independence
of Columbanus's rule while tempering the extremes of Irish
asceticism. Third, these monasteries took on a new meaning in

society. Not only were they centers of religious devotion, but they became spiritual centers for the small political units of family control. They were integrated into the political and social life of the families that had established them. The members of these families who founded these monasteries and served as their first abbots or abbesses came in time to be revered as saints, thus adding a family tradition of supernatural power and prestige to that of traditional lordship.

Gone was the rude, primitive image of the Gallic monastery of Martin's time. Instead, the monasteries founded by the Frankish aristocracy were more in keeping with their noble status. These were great monasteries with richly decorated churches in which aristocratic men and women could continue a noble lifestyle even while dedicating themselves to God. Something of this wealth can be seen in the testament of Burgundofara, daughter of Columbanus's supporter Agneric.[9] She was the abbess of a monastery founded on her father's estates near Meaux, known later as Faremoutiers, but she had not given up her wealth upon entering the convent. In her testament composed in 633 or 634 she made her foundation her principal heir. The donations included property she had inherited from her father or had acquired from a variety of persons, and consisted of rural *villae*, vineyards, mills on the Marne and the Aubetin, and houses and land within the city of Meaux and its suburbs. This was clearly no rustic hermitage but a wealthy institution integrated through personal and propery ties with the founder's family. Nor did such ties end with Burgundofara's death; the monastery continued under family control, forming a family necropolis and spiritual center.

The best example of such a family necropolis is the church of St. Paul at Jouarre, founded, as discussed earlier, by Audo, the son of Columbanus's supporter Autharius. Here are still found, among others, the tombs of Audo, Theodochilda, the first abbess of Jouarre, and her brother Agilbert, who spent the first part of his career as a missionary in England and was made bishop of Wessex before returning to the Continent as bishop of Paris. In addition the crypt contains the tombs of Agilberta, Theodochilda's cousin; Balda, a Bavarian who was the aunt of

Agilberta and Theodochilda; and Moda, Balda's cousin and wife of Autharius. Since in time all of these persons came to be venerated as saints, the family tomb was also a center of spiritual power and prestige for its members.

Probably related to the development of such family mortuary chapels is the transformation of Frankish burial practice which took place around this same time. Since the fourth century, Frankish burials had normally taken place in rural cemeteries such as Lavoye, where the dead were laid to rest fully clothed and supplied with weapons, utensils, and jewelry. Conversion had not affected this practice. Such burials were not statements of religious belief but of social and cultural continuity—solidarity with their ancestors who had been so interred.

However, beginning in the second half of the sixth century, such burial traditions began to be replaced by burials within or around churches. This had long been a Gallo-Roman custom, and as early as Clovis the Frankish royal family had opted for church burial. Now this began to be the rule rather than the exception, and families sought burial at or near saints' tombs. If the family had its own monastery and produced its own saints, as was the case for the descendants of Autharius, so much the better. In other cases, instead of beginning a new burial site, a mortuary chapel would be constructed on the site of the old row cemetery. At Mazerny in the Ardennes, for example, the burials from the sixth century are arranged in the traditional manner, in roughly parallel rows oriented north-south. However a roughly rectangular group of seventh-century burials in the cemetery seem at first glance to be disoriented—some fourteen are oriented east-west. The archaeologist Bailey Young has suggested that these were originally enclosed in a wooden chapel and formed a family group around tombs of a man and a woman. The rich grave articles in these two tombs suggest persons of high social rank and were probably the founders of the chapel, which served as their family necropolis until the entire cemetery was abandoned, possibly in the later eighth century.[10]

In still other cases, as at Flonheim in the Rhineland and Arlon in the Belgian province of Luxembourg, chapels apparently were built over the tombs of men and women who died in the early

sixth or even late fifth centuries. In these cases, it appears that their descendants wished to provide their ancestors, some of whom were probably pagan, a means of sharing in the benefits of the new move toward the sanctification of the aristocratic family.

As with the family of Autharius, integrally connected with this development of family monasteries that were not tied to the local bishop but to the founding family was the parallel development of new concepts of sanctity, which transformed the image of the aristocracy. We examined in Chapter Four the model of sanctity elaborated by the Gallo-Roman episcopacy. The saints were either men of senatorial background who pursued the active life of a bishop, or else they were holy men and women who fled the world to become monks or recluses, cutting themselves off from the world but remaining carefully under the authority and direction of the bishop. Increasingly in the seventh century a new type of saint emerged—the aristocrat who served actively in the royal court before going on to found monasteries, serve as bishops, and undertake missionary activities, but always stayed in close relationship to the world. Far from being men and women who fled the evils of their day, they in general maintained good relationships with kings and other nobles. After their conversion to religious life they even continued to participate in secular politics. The hagiographers who composed their *vitae* were careful to present them in this light, recalling Matthew 22, 21, "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's."[11] In the hagiography of the seventh century, the part of Caesar was not forgotten—seldom have saints been presented as having such a comfortable relationship with kings, a particularly remarkable situation when one thinks of the accusations made concerning the immorality at Dagobert's court. Audo's brother, Saint Audoenus of Rouen, for example, was a saint in royal service whom, we are told, Dagobert loved above all of his other courtiers. Saint Wandregisel was a noble Austrasian who served in the royal administration and even after receiving tonsure, traveled to court on horseback, the aristocratic mode of transportation par excellence. The most famous of these new saints was Arnulf of Metz, close

counselor and agent of the king and also one of the leading
figures in the Austrasian aristocracy.

Of course, many of the earlier senatorial bishops had also held
important civil offices—we have seen that they had achieved their
sees as a culmination of a late classical *cursus honorum*. How-
ever, in the hagiography of the fifth and sixth centuries, their
earlier careers had been passed over quickly, almost apologeti-
cally. The decisive break between their lives in the world and
their later religious careers was emphasized, and in some cases
they were portrayed as having only symbolically carried out
worldly office after their conversion. Sulpicius Severus had pre-
sented Martin of Tours as having given up warfare even before
formally leaving the Roman army. The lives of saints of the
seventh century, on the other hand, dwell in detail on the sub-
jects' lives before their conversion; they describe their families,
the excellent marriages they made, their duties at court, and the
power and prestige that they enjoyed. In contrast to Sulpicius's
depiction of Martin as a pacific soldier-monk, the author of the
life of Arnulf of Metz even praises Arnulf's extraordinary skill
with arms. Merovingian hagiography only stopped short of pre-
senting saints who continued after their conversion to serve the
Lord as warriors. The saint of the seventh century never aban-
doned his family or his social niveau. Rather, his sanctity was
reflected back on them; the family and its social stratum was
thereby sanctified.

This change in presentation does not indicate simply the
transformation of a literary tradition. Hagiography was essen-
tially a form of propaganda, and these accounts of noble saints
were part of a program, developing both at court and, increas-
ingly, in the power centers of the northern aristocracy, to cele-
brate, justify, and promote the formation of a self-conscious
Christian Frankish elite charcterized by a distinctive cultural
tradition that spread out from Neustria to all parts of the Frank-
ish world.

To say that the new type of saint and the Iro-Frankish monas-
ticism with which it was identified served the needs of the elite
is not to imply that it was merely a political ploy on the part
of the aristocracy. In fact, this new political sanctity probably

was more effective in the Christianization of Francia than had been the older Gallo-Roman tradition. Christianity had long remained an urban phenomenon, and even in the most Romanized areas of the West, the degree of its penetration into the countryside had been minimal. The more active involvement of the northern Frankish aristocracy as well as that of wandering Irish monks such as Columbanus began to introduce Christian observance and cult into the countryside. Religious cult and political power were understood as inseparable, whether at the level of Dagobert or at the local level of Frankish aristocrats who sought to introduce uniformity in cult in their areas of power. Thus it was in the interest of the aristocracy to assist in the implantation of Christianity. For example, the family of Gundoin, who was duke in Alsace in the first half of the seventh century, was responsible for founding monasteries in Alsace as well as in northern Burgundy and for introducing there the cult of Saint Odilia. That Odilia was a member of the family was of course not incidental, but neither was the family's close involvement with Columbanus. Likewise the family of Rodulf, the duke in Thuringia, was involved in Christianization, disseminating the cult from its residences in Erfurt and Würzburg. For such aristocrats, cult and lordship were inseparable.

Some of the most important missionary activities were undertaken by royal bishops educated at the Neustrian court who worked closely with Dagobert. Amandus, an Aquitainian with royal support, was largely responsible for the establishment of monasteries across Flanders, especially at Elnone (later St.-Amand), Ghent, and Antwerp. From Noyon, Acharius and his successors Eligius and Mummolinus were heavily involved in missionary activities, as was Audomar of Thérouanne. All of these activities were supported by the king, particularly through enormous grants of land from the fisc.

This activity was an attempt to establish a Christian and Frankish presence in the north, especially in Frisia which, during the reigns of Chlothar II, Dagobert, and their immediate successors, was becoming increasingly important to the Frankish kingdom because of its vital role in trade and the exchange routes between Paris, London, Cologne, and the regions be-

tween the Scheldt and the Weser. The intimate connection
between Christian expansion and royal involvement in this trade
can be seen in the establishment of a church in Utrecht.[12] The
importance of the mouth of the Rhine for trade with Cologne
was beginning to increase around 600; gold coins minted around
that date by the Frisians imitating Merovingian coins have been
found in southeast England, on the western coast of Jütland
from the mouth of the Elbe to Limfjord, and up the Rhine
as far as Coblenz and even Lake Constance. By 630 Duurstede,
located slightly south of Utrecht, had become the center of
Frisian trade. At this time Dagobert established the church of
Utrecht under the control of Bishop Cunibert of Cologne, to
whom he donated the fort at Utrecht on the condition that he
would evangelize the Frisians. At the same time he also trans-
ferred two coiners, Madelinus and Rimoaldus, from the mint at
Maastricht to Duurstede in order to take charge of and to bene-
fit from the commercial exchanges increasingly taking place in
the region. The evangelization of the region and the control of
its economic activities were closely related.

The effects of the Iro-Frankish religious movement were not
limited to the king, the Neustrian court, and the northern aris-
tocracy. Southerners, such as Desiderius of Cahors, raised at
court were also deeply affected by it and, as the amalgamation
of the various aristocratic traditions in Francia became more
pronounced, the movement spread south and east as well as
north. Although individual Gallo-Roman bishops had often
taken seriously their responsibility to Christianize the rural pop-
ulations of their dioceses, the first half of the seventh century
saw, in the areas north and south of the Loire as well as east of
the Rhine, the first serious, concerted, and systematic attempt to
spread Chrisianity not only within the elite but throughout
society. For the first time in Western history, the tide of religious
culture had reversed. After centuries of the Mediterranean forms
of Christianity gradually penetrating north, a new and vigorous
form of Christianity, closely tied to royal and aristocratic inter-
ests and power bases, was spreading out from the north and
gradually transforming the Romanized south.

Merovingian Obsolescence

Dagobert's Successors

From Chalon where he continued his work for justice, he next traveled to Auxerre by way of Autun, and then went on through Sens to Paris; and here, leaving Queen Gomatrudis at the villa of Reuille on the advice of the Franks because she was sterile, he married Nantechildis, a most beautiful girl, and made her his queen.[1]

This description of Dagobert's second marriage, taken from the *Gesta Dagoberti* written long after the event, reflects the hindsight with which later generations viewed Dagobert's decision to abandon Gomatrudis. Pseudo-Fredegar, the source for the *Gesta*, mentions no reason for the divorce, saying only that it had been at Reuille that he had married Gomatrudis, and says nothing about Nantechildis's beauty, only that she had been a mere serving girl before her marriage.[2] As we have seen, Merovingians did not usually consider it necessary to put away one wife before taking another. However in this case Dagobert may have had several reasons: Gomatrudis was the sister of his stepmother Sichildis, whom he had married at his father's command. Thus she may have been the aunt of his stepbrother Charibert and sister of Brodulf, whom he had just had executed for plotting against him on behalf of Charibert. Divorcing his wife was the logical step to rid himself of the final influence of this family whose alliance with the royal family had been orchestrated by his father.

However, the later tradition ascribing the divorce due to her sterility is understandable. By 629 Dagobert must have been desperate for heirs, and if he was not, surely "the Franks," that

is to say, the aristocracy, was. Since the beginning of the dynasty, failure to leave an adult heir had normally meant trouble—a long interregnum characterized by vicious fighting for control over the future king or kings, an opportunity for aristocratic factions to increase their power, and overthrow of the *stabilitas* that Dagobert so desired. He had been able to capitalize on the consolidations made by his father because he had been associated in the reign six years prior to his father's death. Joint rulership proved the surest means of providing royal continuity. Thus by 629 he was under pressure to provide an heir or heirs, from himself as well as from the aristocracy. While the nobles would not tolerate an autocrat, a weak king was to no one's advantage. Periods of weak central power normally meant confusion, the outbreak of old feuds, and violent competition among the magnates. A strong kingdom needed a strong king, and for this he needed a son. This remarriage was not his only attempt to produce an heir. In the following year an Austrasian woman, Ragnetrudis, bore him a son, Sigibert III. In about 633 Nantechildis provided him with a second, Clovis II.

Still, it was not enough. Dagobert died in 639, leaving his sons too young to provide the kind of continuity necessary to sustain the tradition of their father and grandfather. This proved the pattern for most of the next century. Sigibert III died young, leaving a young son, Dagobert II, who was tonsured and sent into monastic exile in Ireland, to return twenty years later; Clovis II, after a two-year interregnum and long minority, reigned until 657, when he died, leaving still more minor sons—Childeric II in Austrasia, Chlothar III in Neustria, and Theuderic III, who succeeded his brother Chlothar in 673. Thus for almost forty years, the Merovingian family would be unable to provide any continuity to the central administration of the kingdom.

These Merovingians, however, were not all the *rois fainéants,* or "do-nothing kings," of popular legend. Childeric II of Austrasia, for example, attempted to recover royal authority and direct his administration; he was murdered for his efforts. His brother Theuderic was likewise not content to merely reign but, after the death of the *maior domus* Ebroin, reunited the king-

dom and actually managed for a brief time to rule, although he
was defeated in the battle of Tertry (687) by Pippin II and kept
under firm control until his death in 690/91. Upon his death,
the cycle repeated itself; he left as heir a small son, Clovis IV.
Thus from 691 the Merovingian kings were once more thor-
oughly under the control of the various aristocratic groups who
were now the central actors in the struggle for political hege-
mony. The members of the royal family were useful symbols
around which to organize support, but they played no indepen-
dent role. Even the exact kinship connections among the later
Merovingians is unclear. Contemporaries did not consider them
of sufficient interest to bother to note the exact relationship be-
tween the last Merovingian king, Childeric III (reigned 743–
751), and the more illustrious descendants of Clovis.

Thus the long series of minorities, more than any other single
factor, contributed to the decline of royal power. This circum-
stance, rather than the myth of hereditary degeneracy, which we
shall examine in the next chapter, led to the dynasty's fall. How-
ever it is insufficient to explain completely what happened.
Other royal families have survived long minorities and recovered
their control of government. The loss of Merovingian power was
part of a much more complex transformation of the Frankish
world in the seventh and early eighth centuries. While these
transformations grew out of the political, social, economic, and
religious traditions already forming in the reign of Chlothar II
and Dagobert, they were not such as to inevitably lead to the
obsolescence of Merovingian kingship, but combined with the
series of minorities, they proved fatal.

Within Neustria-Burgundy and Austrasia, aristocratic groups
fought each other for control over the fisc, the monastic net-
work, and the office of *maior domus*. In the peripheral regions
of Frisia, Thuringia, Alemannia, Bavaria, Provence, and Aqui-
taine, local dukes established themselves as princes of autono-
mous principalities.

In this struggle, the balance between reform monasticism and
royal service was lost, and the Frankish episcopacy adopted more
than ever the characteristics of secular lordship as bishops looked
not only to governing their *civitates* and acting as advisors to

kings, but became directly involved in the struggle for control over the sections of Francia. The educational traditions inherited by the church from the Gallo-Roman aristocracy suffered irreparable damage during this same time. The decline of letters so evident in Francia by the mid-eighth century was probably less than a century old.

The loss of Frisia and thus the northern port of Duurstede and the temporary disruptions in Provence, hobbling its Mediterranean ports of Fos and Marseille, interfered with both ends of the long-distance commercial relations of the kingdom. The internal disturbances also ended the regular plunder of neighboring kingdoms, cutting the supply of booty and tribute which had been the primary source of specie with which to carry on this commerce. In place of gold coinage designed for display and international trade, new, local silver coinages appeared, which, while testifying to vigorous local exchange networks, probably indicate a decrease in long-distance commerce.

And yet this period also saw important missionary activities, the consolidation of the Iro-Frankish monastic movement, the progressive expansion of the Benedictine rule across much of Francia, and the emergence of those geographical units which, in the long run, proved more stable than the Frankish empire itself. We must consider each of these changes.

Neustria-Burgundy

Although the Austrasian aristocracy had hoped that Dagobert might pass a unified kingdom on to his elder son Sigibert III, four years before his death Dagobert specified that Sigibert was to inherit only Austrasia, while his younger son Clovis II should receive Neustria and Burgundy. In addition, Sigibert received one-third of Dagobert's treasure, the cities of Poitiers, Clermont, Rodez, and Cahors in Aquitaine, Marseille in Provence, and other cities south of the Loire. The remaining two-thirds of the royal treasure were divided equally between Dagobert's widow Nantechildis, and Clovis, who was probably around four years old at the time of his father's death.

Dagobert had named Aega, a leading member of the Neustrian

aristocracy and a faithful supporter of the royal house, as *maior domus* and regent (639–641). He and Nantechildis directed the royal household as well as the kingdom. When Aega died in 642 he was succeeded by Erchinoald (regent 641–658), another Neustrian magnate related to Dagobert's mother Haldetrud. His lands were centered on the lower Seine in the area of Jumièges and St.-Wandrille as well as in the region of Noyon-St.-Quentin and on the Marne and Somme rivers.

Erchinoald seems to have belonged to a large and powerful clan in Neustria that attempted to dominate Neustria for much of the seventh century. The process by which he and his kin worked to solidify and expand their political and social position illustrates the transformation of the Neustrian aristocracy in the generations following the death of Dagobert. Although after Erchinoald's death, the Neustrian magnates elected Ebroin as *maior,* the first to be selected by the aristocracy rather than appointed by the king or his regent, Erchinoald's son was chosen *maior domus* in 675. Circumstantial evidence suggests that the later *maiores,* Waratto (680–686), his son Ghislemarus (680), and son-in-law Bercharius (686–688) may also have been related to him. After Pippin II defeated Bercharius at Tertry in 687 and presumably had him executed a year later, he arranged a marriage between his own son Drogo and Anstrudis, the widow of Bercharius and daughter of Waratto. The kin network and the property amassed by this family through the seventh century were considered important enough to incorporate into the family of the Pippinids.

Erchinoald was intimately connected with the Iro-Frankish monastic movement. He initially welcomed Irish pilgrims such as the wandering abbot Furseus, who arrived in Neustria around 641 after having founded communities in Ireland and in East Anglia. Erchinoald assisted Furseus in founding monasteries at Lagny and on his own estates at Péronne. He also ceded the estates of Wandregisel, where Furseus founded the monastery of Fontenelle.

This involvement in the monastic movement was part of the process by which Erchinoald built his family fortunes, which were increasingly independent of the royal household. Furseus

in particular was the religious figure around whom Erchinoald constructed his family cult. The Irish abbot had been asked by Erchinoald to stand as his son's godfather, and to this end had invited him to Péronne. Spiritual kinship thus bound Furseus and Erchinoald's descendants. Although the estates at Péronne offered to Furseus for a monastery had been acquired from the royal fisc, according to the nearly contemporary *Virtues of Saint Furseus,* after the saint had selected the site, Erchinoald attributed them not to royal largesse but to divine favor: "I give thanks to God who gave me this property where you have decided to establish your dwelling."[3] The foundation of Péronne and the presence of the saint were clearly to reflect on Erchinoald, and he considered both his property. After Furseus died at Mézerolles, a small monastery in the Somme which he had founded on the estates of the duke Haimo, the *maior domus* arrived and demanded, "Give me my monk." According to the *Virtues,* the issue was decided by a sort of trial by ordeal. Two wild bulls were hitched to a cart bearing the body of the saint and allowed to go wherever God determined. The bulls went straight to Péronne and there Furseus was buried.

The care with which Erchinoald nurtured his relationship with Furseus, both during and after the saint's lifetime, did not mean that he was an unconditional supporter of the Irish monastic tradition. After Furseus died Erchinoald expelled the Irish monks from Péronne, presumably replacing them with Franks. Ominously for the future of Erchinoald's family fortunes, the monks found refuge with Iduberga, wife of Pippin of Herstal, and thus a member of the highest circles of the Austrasian aristocracy.

Nantechildis and Erchinoald exercised little power in Burgundy, where since the time of Chlothar II there had been no royal *maior domus* to control the region. In 642, Nantechildis traveled to Orléans in the kingdom of Burgundy and there reestablished the office. She wished to increase her direct authority in the region and managed to convince a portion of the aristocracy to select as *maior domus* Flaochad, a man with close ties to Neustria and especially to Nantechildis, whose niece he married. Erchinoald apparently saw this as an occasion to find

outside support for his own position, since he entered into an agreement with Flaochad in which each promised the other support in his office. Although Flaochad had promised loyalty to the magnates and bishops of the kingdom, he soon faced major opposition from the aristocracy, led by the Burgundian patrician Willibad. He had been one of the three loyal support- ers of Dagobert responsible for killing Brodulf almost fifteen years before. Flaochad and Willibad apparently had previously been allies, but Flaochad's new position had turned them into personal enemies.

The reasons for Willibad's opposition provide considerable insight into the Burgundian kingdom in the mid-seventh cen- tury. It has been seen as a Burgundian-Roman hostility to the "Frank" Flaochad, as an attempt to maintain local autonomy, or even as simply a private feud between the *patricius* and the *maior*. The reasons were probably rather complex. Since the time of the last *maior domus*, Willibad had been one of the Bur- gundians to profit most from the benign neglect the region had been subjected to. From his control of the regions of Lyon, Vienne, and Valence, he had become extremely wealthy and powerful. Others, particularly in the area around Chalon, the old center of the Burgundian kingdom, had also profited, and the establishment of a *maior domus* with close ties to Frankish Neustria clearly meant that this independence was threatened.

However, Willibad was hardly the leader of a united Bur- gundy. Other Burgundian aristocrats, including Duke Chram- nelenus of Besançon and Duke Wandalbertus of Chambly, both of the clan of Waldelenus, the supporter of Columbanus, and Duke Amalgar of Dijon, supported Flaochad. The reason is probably not so much that they were ethnic Romans or Franks opposing ethnic Burgundians in a last struggle for autonomy as that they represented the other major clans in Burgundy which had long been in competition with Willibad and may have been feuding with his family in the past. The arrival of a Neustrian- backed *maior* gave them a strong outside ally to use in their fight against Willibad, a fight which culminated in a bloody battle at Autun involving only the principals and their closest allies. Pseudo-Fredegar records that the remainder of the Neus-

trians and Burgundians simply stood by, evidence that, to most present, the fight was not one of ethnic or national resistance or of public revolt but rather a private feud.[4] Thus the conflict was both internal, pitting the major families in Burgundy against each other, and external, involving the Burgundian patricians, as opposed to Neustrian authority.

The long-term results of the effort to reintroduce the office of *maior* and affirm Neustrian control in the region were minimal. Willibad was killed along with his close supporters, but Flaochad was unable to follow up his victory; he died of a fever eleven days after the battle. Nantechildis, who had begun the whole project, had died a few months before the final confrontation. The Burgundian office of *maior domus* apparently continued in the person of one Radobertus until around 662, when the palaces of the two kingdoms were definitively united under the Neustrian *maior* Ebroin. The real winners of the contest were probably the clan of Waldelenus. In the next decades they would spread their authority south of Besançon into lower Burgundy and Provence.

In addition to the status Erchinoald had by his kinship with Clovis II's grandmother, his office of *maior domus,* the wealth he had inherited or acquired from the fisc, and the spiritual prestige he enjoyed as the "owner" of a fine collection of Irish monks, Erchinoald enjoyed yet another source of power: he had provided his young king Clovis with a wife from among his slaves. Baldechildis had arrived in Francia as an Anglo-Saxon slave purchased by Erchinoald who, according to the author of her *vita,* was so taken by her beauty, intelligence, and strong character that he intended to make her his wife (or at least a concubine). Instead she became the wife of his king.

Marrying women of low birth was, as we have seen, a common practice for Merovingian kings ever since Charibert I (reigned 561–567), who had married two sisters in his wife's service, Merofled and Marcoveifa. Later Chilperic I (reigned 560/61–584) married one of his wife's servants, Fredegund. Two of Theudebert II's wives, Bilichildis and Theudechild, had been slaves, as was Dagobert's wife Nantechildis. Such marriages made considerable political sense. A marriage with the daughter of an

aristocrat necessarily meant contracting an alliance with the wife's family and raising her male kin to favored positions. This could in turn alienate other aristocratic groups and create powerful opposition centering around the queen's kin should her sons not be favored in any future divisions of the kingdom. The complications caused Dagobert by the kin of his wife Gomatrudis shows how serious this threat could be. Slaves and lowborn women, on the other hand, did not represent powerful aristocratic parties, and if they failed to produce sons or fell out of favor they could be put aside. If, on the other hand, they did produce male heirs and show themselves capable and intelligent, as did Nantechildis and Baldechildis, they could rise to considerable prominence.

Lacking powerful male kin, such queens tended to turn to ecclesiastics for support, and in turn proved among the most important founders of monasteries and supporters of missionary activity. This was true of Baldechildis, who established particularly important relationships with bishops Chrodobert of Paris and Audoenus of Rouen and with abbots Waldabert of Luxeuil, Theudefrid of Corbie (a monastery she founded), and Filibert of Jumièges. After the death of her husband Clovis in 657, she assumed the regency for his minor son Chlothar III (lived 657–683) with the support of her ecclesiastical advisors. Her enormous generosity toward religious foundations helped transform the region of Paris from a largely fiscal region to an ecclesiastical one, a policy which for a time won her and her sons important support but which eventually provided the Arnulfings with the means to insert themselves into a powerful position in Neustria. But this effect was no doubt far from her mind at the time.

Her active involvement in monastic foundation and reform included founding Corbie and Chelles, introducing the mixed rule into St.-Denis, guaranteeing this institution ecclesiastical immunity by the bishop and secular immunity by the king, as well as the support and enrichment of numerous other basilicas and monasteries. Her purposes were not simply to gain the political support of these institutions. The program of religious reform was a continuation of that concern for the "stability of the kingdom" already expressed by Dagobert, and was particu-

larly a way to enhance royal prestige. The basilicas she and other Merovingian kings and queens supported were to a great extent royal necropolises, equivalent to the smaller monasteries such as Jouarre founded by aristocratic families. The reform and regulation of these institutions' liturgical commemoration of the dead was closely tied to the development of the royal cult; Baldechildis united previous Merovingians with her own sons. As the author of Baldechildis's *vita* expressed it, in a phrase almost certainly borrowed from one of the royal privileges for such institutions, these grants were made so that "it might be more pleasing to them [the monks] to petition the clemency of Christ the highest king on behalf of the king and for peace."[5]

At this time, the use of the saints traditionally associated with the royal family took a new turn. Baldechildis, her husband before his death, and her sons, in an effort to surround themselves with the power of these special dead, began to draw together a collection of relics in the royal palace. Not content to venerate the saints in their traditional locations, which constituted the sacred geography of Francia, they began to assemble them around the king. Thus Clovis II had already removed the arm of Saint Denis from its basicila; shortly after the *cappa* of Saint Martin, which had been venerated for centuries in Tours, was added to the royal collection, which in time came to be the center of the chapel, the very name of which comes from *cappa*.

In 658 Erchinoald died and Baldechildis, presumably not wishing to strengthen her former owner's family, along with the "Franks," selected as his successor Ebroin, an aristocrat from the area of Soissons who had already been part of the royal household. Ebroin and Baldechildis resumed the policy of merging the Neustrian and Burgundian palaces and attempting to reassert their authority in the name of Chlothar throughout the two regions. The result, of course, was violent opposition in Neustria and Burgundy.

The first attempt against Ebroin was an abortive assassination plot led by Ragnebert, son of Duke Radebert, a Neustrian probably related to the Burgundian *maior domus*, Radobertus, who was replaced by Ebroin. Ragnebert and his accomplices were

caught, and he was sent into monastic exile in Burgundy, where Ebroin had him killed.

This attempt was representative of the opposition Ebroin and Baldechildis met. Ragnebert was commemorated in the diocese of Lyon as a martyr, just as was Willibad, who had also died at the hands of Neustrians. However the real issue during the second half of the seventh century was not really Burgundian autonomy from Neustrian hegemony, but the individual power of Neustrian and Burgundian magnates. Private interests were taking precedence over regional ones, and even ecclesiastical magnates were increasingly transforming their territories into independent lordships, establishing mints, and conducting affairs autonomously. Baldechildis and Ebroin attempted to curb this by appointing loyal bishops who had been raised and educated at the palace and were proponents of Iro-Frankish monasticism. This meant breaking the tradition formalized by Chlothar II of naming only local men to office. They faced tremendous opposition to this new policy from such families as that of Bishop Aunemund of Lyon and his brother Dalfinus, the count of the city, who had together transformed Lyon and the surrounding area into an autonomous principality. Aunemund's leadership of the opposition in Burgundy led to his execution. The *Life* of the Anglo-Saxon Wilfrid accused Baldechildis of having ordered the deaths of nine bishops—this was her only means of ending autonomous episcopal-aristocratic enclaves. In Lyon she replaced Aunemund with her faithful supporter and almoner Genesius. She also appointed a monk from St.-Wandrille, Erembert, bishop of Toulouse, and another supporter, Leodegar, whose brother Warinus was count of Paris, bishop of Autun.

As long as Baldechildis was regent, these ecclesiastics remained firm supporters of the program she and Ebroin were directing. However when in 664 or 665 she was forced into retirement at her monastery at Chelles, they joined the opposition, with Leodegar at its head. In 673 Chlothar III suddenly died, and Ebroin raised Chlothar's younger brother Theuderic III to the throne. The reaction of the Neustrian and Burgundian aristocracy was to shift their support to Theuderic's brother, Childeric

II, who had been made king in Austrasia. Abandoned, Ebroin had no choice but to accept monastic exile to Luxeuil while his puppet Theuderic was exiled to St.-Denis.

The reunification of Neustria and Burgundy did not last. Soon Leodegar fell into disfavor with Childeric II and was also sent to Luxeuil. In 675 Childeric was murdered by assassins probably connected to both Ebroin and Leodegar, and the result was civil war. Ebroin and Leodegar returned from exile, the latter rallying around Theuderic III, who was removed from St.-Denis. Leodegar's forces elected Erchinoald's son, Leudesius, as *maior*, while Ebroin joined with Austrasians who rallied around an alleged son of Childeric, Clovis III. Ebroin was victorious, killed both Leodegar and Leudesius, and managed to reunite Neustria-Burgundy for another five years. However, when Ebroin attempted to extend his power over Austrasia as well, he met opposition in the form of a descendant of Arnulf of Metz and Pippin of Herstal, Pippin II. In 680 Ebroin was murdered by a Neustrian magnate who then fled to Pippin for refuge.

Austrasia

The long series of minorities and resulting internecine rivalries in the Neustrian-Burgundian kingdom tore apart the synthesis achieved by Dagobert, although how this happened can only be inferred, as many of the details are extremely sketchy. Our knowledge of Austrasia during this period is even more tantalizingly obscure. For the first time since Clovis, someone who may not have been of royal blood apparently ruled a Frankish subkingdom.

Sigibert III, whom Dagobert had appointed to rule Austrasia, died in 656, leaving a son, Dagobert II. What happened next is the subject of enormous and probably endless debate. The only near contemporary narrative source to speak of it, the *Liber Historiae Francorum,* says:

> When King Sigibert died Grimoald had his small son Dagobert tonsured and sent him and Bishop Dido of Poitiers on pilgrimage to Ireland and established his own son in the kingdom. The Franks, who were extremely angry because of this prepared a trap for him

and having caught him they took him before Clovis, king of the
Franks. He was imprisoned in Paris where he was bound and tor-
tured and, deserving death because he had harassed his lord, he was
tortured to death.[6]

The Grimoald in question was the *maior domus* Grimoald I,
son of Pippin I the Elder, and his son referred to was Childe-
bert, who apparently did reign for a time in Austrasia. It thus
appears that the family which in the next century would replace
the Merovingians had made a preliminary, abortive attempt to
do so in the 650s, and were thwarted by the Neustrian aristoc-
racy. But it is entirely unclear if this is what happened, although
certainly the significance of royal succession was being tested
against aristocratic power.

Like so much Merovingian history, the actual series of events
and their chronology defy exact determination, although there
is no lack of scholarly argument defending one or another
theory. If one takes the above account at face value, it seems that
the attempted usurpation was abortive. Since Sigibert III died
in 656 and his brother Clovis II in 657, it might appear that the
usurpation lasted at most a year before Grimoald was betrayed
to the Neustrians and executed. However evidence from a
charter that Grimoald was alive in 661 introduced a change in
this theory. Dagobert II was presumed to have reigned until
661, when Grimoald exiled him to Ireland and placed his son
Childebert on the throne. To support this theory, it was sug-
gested that a scribe copying the above passage wrote "Chlo-
doveo" (Clovis) by error instead of "Chlothario" and that thus
Grimoald's execution actually took place under Chlothar III
around 661 or 662. But yet another charter dated "in the sixth
year of King Childebert" suggested that the usurpation must
have taken place even earlier, and that Grimoald's son was ac-
cepted in Austrasia and Neustria as a legitimate king from the
death of Sigibert until Childebert's own death in 661; only after
this was his father betrayed and executed. Others have speculated
that actually there was no usurpation as such, but that Grimoald
was the descendant of a Merovingian daughter and therefore had
some right to give his son a Merovingian name and have him
succeed Sigibert. It may even be that Dagobert II had been

exiled not by the ambitious Grimoald but by the Neustrians. The whole idea of a usurpation would then be a later reinterpretation of events from the Neustrian perspective. We will never know for sure.

Whatever the actual events were in Austrasia, the whole confusing episode indicates highly significant attitude shifts concerning the relationship of the region to the Merovingian kingship. Presumably, when Grimoald's son was adopted as king, Sigibert III's son Dagobert II had not yet been born. Thus the kingdom may have faced the likelihood that upon the king's death, his brother Clovis II would succeed him, thus reuniting the entire kingdom under Neustrian control. Apparently this was unacceptable in Austrasia, a region which, as we have seen, had a longer tradition of unity and autonomy than either Neustria or Burgundy. Under both Chlothar II and Dagobert, Austrasia's identity had been protected by the elevation of its own king with his own palace and central court. Whatever the circumstances were surrounding Childebert's ascension, the hostility of the Austrasians to Neustrian control was clearly the foremost consideration.

This hostility was not based on any sort of "ethnic" opposition between East and West, Germanic or Roman. In the seventh century, Austrasia included not only the eastern regions around Metz and Trier, but such old Roman cities as Reims, Châlons, and Laon. No linguistic boundary separated the regions, and families had ties in both areas. The magnates thought of themselves as Franks. The primary considerations were spheres of influence and local political traditions.

Whatever Grimoald's ancestry or the nature of his son's rise to the throne, his destruction was a severe blow to his family's aspirations, although the fact that this blow did not permanently end the clan's future indicates how well-established it was. But in the short run, the aspirations of the family and their authority in Austrasia underwent an eclipse. After Childebert's death, Baldechildis and Ebroin managed to place her minor son, the Neustrian king Chlothar III, on the Austrasian throne. In this arrangement the opponents of Grimoald, led by Chimnechild, the widow of Sigibert, and the Austrasian duke Wulfoald, seem to

have taken a leading part, and in the next year they arranged a compromise whereby the young brother of Chlothar, Childeric II, would marry his cousin, who was the daughter of Sigibert III and Chimnechild and sister of the exiled Dagobert II. Chimnechild undertook the regency of the young Childeric, thus maintaining Austrasian control of the palace.

In a society in which kinship was traced exclusively or even primarily through the male line, Grimoald's defeat would have meant the end of his family. However, because of the fluid nature of aristocratic *Sippe* in the early Middle Ages, even such a severe reversal could not eradicate Pippin's clan. Grimoald's own line apparently ended with the death of Childebert, but the alliance of his father's family with that of Arnulf of Metz, contracted through the marriage of Grimoald's sister Begga to Ansegisel, a son of Arnulf, assured the continuation of the kindred. Of this family, one hears nothing for the next twenty years. However in time the Pippinid tradition would return in the person of Pippin II and even Grimoald would be remembered in the person of Grimoald II, *maior domus* in the early eighth century.

One of the reasons for the survival of this kindred was the religious significance acquired by some of the family, particularly Arnulf of Metz and Gertrudis of Nivelles. The body of Arnulf, who was initially buried in Remiremont, was translated by his successor to the Church of the Apostles in Metz, where his cult was fostered and developed by his descendants. The extraordinary role played by Arnulf in the developing self-perception of this family is indicated by the fact that, in contrast with the usual hagiographical tradition which calls for the parents of the saint to be named, Arnulf's seventh-century *vita* does not identify his parents, nor have any subsequent attempts to discover their identities proven successful. Arnulf is, like some mythical hero, the founder of the family, but has himself no identifiable ancestry.

Gertrudis was the sister of Grimoald and abbess of the Pippinid family monastery of Nivelles. Although early attempts to see Gertrudis as a "Germanic Isis" are certainly distortions, the growth of the cult of this woman, who rejected a political marriage at the court of Dagobert II for a life in the family monas-

tery, became an important element in the sanctification of the descendants of her sister Begga, who married Ansegisel.

These two cults provided a sacred legitimization of the family, in direct opposition to the growing royal cult begun by Dagobert I and continued and developed by Baldechildis. By the end of the century, Arnulf and Gertrudis had developed a following that extended far beyond the Arnulfing kindred and their dependents. Both cults spread across a Francia soon to be governed by their descendants.

Reunification under the Arnulfings

As we have seen, the death of the Neustrian Chlothar III in 673 and the reaction of the Neustrian-Burgundian aristocracy against Ebroin led to the invitation to Childeric II to assume the kingship in Neustria. However, in order to protect themselves from the introduction of Austrasian control, he was required to guarantee what amounted to the provisions of Chlothar II's Edict of Paris forbidding the appointment of *rectores* from outside the various regions of the reunited kingdom. When the king attempted to renege on this agreement and appoint the Austrasian duke Wulfoald *maior* of the entire kingdom, he was assassinated along with his pregnant wife.

The resulting civil war paved the way for a return of the family of Grimoald in the person of Pippin II, who, as duke in Austrasia apparently made an alliance with Ebroin against Wulfoald and Dagobert II, who had returned from Ireland in 676 and had begun a serious attempt to regain control of Austrasia. In 679 Dagobert II was assassinated, presumably for the same reason as Childeric—the great magnates of both kingdoms had no use for a Merovingian who wanted to rule as well as reign. The assassination of Ebroin himself in·680 showed that Austrasia, under the leadership of Pippin (Wulfoald died the same year), would not be dominated by Neustria.

For six years the new Neustrian *maior*, Waratto, kept peace with the Austrasians, but only with difficulty. After his death in 686, Pippin moved against Waratto's successor and son-in-law Bercharius, and at the battle of Tertry-sur-Somme defeated the

Neustrians. Pippin acquired access to Theuderic III, who had kept himself alive by being accommodating to Ebroin, Waratto, and Bercharius. Pippin now had a chance to make himself not the duke or *maior* but, in the words of later annalists, the *princeps* or ruler of all Francia.

After Tertry

He had acquired the chance, but not yet the reality. After 686 Pippin began the most serious and difficult aspect of consolidating power in Neustria. Military conquest alone was not sufficient, nor the heavy-handed suppression of the aristocracy that Ebroin had attempted. Another aristocratic rebellion would have taken place, another assassin would have appeared, and Pippin would have gone the way of so many others. Instead, in 688 he returned to Austrasia, leaving his agent Nordebertus and presumably, his son Drogo, to consolidate his family among the power structures in Neustria—the kin networks that had been the source of Waratto's power, the royal court, and the patronage of the church.

The first was the most easily and readily accomplished. Bercharius died soon after Tertry, at the hands, it was said, of his mother-in-law, although Pippin could not have been too saddened by his death, and Bercharius's widow Anstrudis married Drogo, Pippin's elder son. As discussed earlier, the kindred of Waratto may well have had connections to the family of Erchinoald, and through him to the mother of Dagobert I. By arranging the marriage of Drogo and Anstrudis, Pippin thus absorbed the Neustrian party of Erchinoald. Rather than alienating the powerful Neustrian *Sippe*, it became part of the foundation of Arnulfing power.

This kinship with the old Neustrian *maior* family gave Pippin access to the second pillar of Neustrian power, the Merovingian court. We have seen that since Dagobert I, rendering justice had been a major function of the Merovingian kings. With the exercise of political leadership through the appointment of counts and bishops long denied them, the Merovingian court of justice had become their single most important contribution to the

Frankish realm. To the king's court came magnates from through-
out Francia. With the king, or his *maior* or count of the palace
acting as chair, cases of major importance involving the laity
and ecclesiastical powers of the realm were debated and decided.
While the king was hardly in a position to mete out the kind
of fearsome justice for which Dagobert had been famous, and
in fact these later Merovingians may often not even have been
present, these assemblies provided aristocrats a structure in
which to participate in nonviolent but nonetheless vital compe-
tition.

Acquiring this power base proved more slow, as the process
was more delicate. A consensus among the magnates had to be
formed; enemies had to be defeated in the court of public opin-
ion and according to the rules of Frankish customary law. This
was not always easy, as two cases will serve to illustrate. The
first case involves Pippin's confiscating the property of a former
supporter of Ebroin, Amalbert. Amalbert had been accused of
having unjustly taken the property of an orphan. The accused
failed to appear. When Amalbert's son Amalricús attempted to
speak in his father's defense, it was determined that he had no
authority from his father to do so. The case was decided in favor
of the orphan, the property returned, and Amalbert was forced
to pay a fine. One should not be misled by the formal descrip-
tion of the proceedings to think that the case was simply decided
by the magnates present simply on its technical merits—the lan-
guage hides the real maneuvering of the Pippinids for their
cause. This begins to be evident when one realizes that the guar-
dian of the orphan was none other than Pippin's agent Norde-
bertus, and this judgment was the final act of a long series of
court appearances in which the Pippinids had pursued their old
enemy. The victory, as Paul Fouracre has pointed out, was a tri-
umph of Pippin's ability to mobilize collective magnate power
against an individual. Participating in this court were some
twelve bishops and forty secular magnates.[7]

The royal court was not always a tool of Arnulfing policy. It
was still possible for the other magnates at the royal court to
deal them an occasional setback. Such a defeat can be seen in a
second court decision. In 697 Drogo appeared before the court

of King Childebert III (694/95–711) at Compiègne, the royal
villa which had largely replaced Paris as the Merovingian's fa-
vorite residence, to face an accusation by the abbot of the mon-
astery of Tussonval concerning an estate at Noisy. The abbot
produced a diploma of King Theuderic III confirming the monas-
tery's right to the estate and claimed that Drogo had unjustly
seized it. Drogo replied that the estate had come to him through
his wife by means of a contract of exchange. It thus appears that
he was attempting to acquire the former estates of Waratto's
family. The abbot admitted that an exchange had been planned,
but asserted that it had not taken place. When Drogo could not
produce documentary evidence of the exchange, the case was
decided in favor of the abbot.

Once more, procedure and legal merits provided the formal
structure within which conflicts over broader issues were fought
out. Among the "bishops and magnates" assembled to hear the
case were Pippin himself, Grimoald, Pippin's son and successor
(designated as *máior*), and Bishop Constantine of Beauvais, a
loyal supporter of Pippin. But also present were Bishop Savaric
of Auxerre, and Agneric, *patricius* of Provence or lower Bur-
gundy, both of whom were apparently extending their own lord-
ships in the later seventh century at the expense of the kingdom.
The court proceeding was thus probably a confrontation be-
tween Pippinid and anti-Pippinid magnates, and in this instance
the latter won.

The third foundation of Pippin's power in Neustria was the
church. We have seen how the Neustrian kings, queens, and
aristocrats had taken a leading role in the establishment of reli-
gious foundations as a principal basis for their power, in the
process transforming many of the old fiscal lands into church
lands. Pippin and his successors systematically insinuated them-
selves as protectors of these institutions, thereby coming to con-
trol enormous power in the region. Again, the merger of his
family into that of Waratto was a key to this policy. In the last
years of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth
Pippin solidified his control over the church in the region of
Rouen, where the bulk of the estates of Erchinoald and Waratto
had been. The key institutions in this process were the monas-

teries of St.-Wandrille and Jumièges and the Rouen episcopacy. He had early acquired patronage of the small religious founda- tion of Fleury-en-Vexin, which he enlarged and reformed with the assistance of monks from St.-Wandrille. Most importantly, he took the monastery under his own protection and that of his family, a form of immunity that did not involve the king and thus established the institution under his direct control. Grad- ually, he and his successors undertook the protection and patron- age of St.-Wandrille and Jumièges. Because of the authority exercised by the bishop of Rouen over these institutions, it was necessary to exile Bishop Ansbert, a supporter of the older Neus- trian party. This made it possible to place Godinus, probably the bishop of Lyon and a supporter of Pippin, as abbot of Ju- mièges. Pippin similarly established Bishop Bainus of Thérou- anne, previously associated with Fleury-en-Vexin, in a similar position at St.-Wandrille.

Control of these enormously wealthy institutions established a firm position in the lower Seine from which to extend family influence elsewhere in the reunited kingdom. In the dioceses of Nantes, Châlons, and Soissons, for example, essentially the same process was followed: monasteries were reformed and enlarged, new monks, often from St.-Wandrille, were introduced, abbots and bishops who were members of or loyal to the Pippin family were installed, and the key institutions were taken under the family protection.

These three measures—mergers with regional aristocratic fami- lies, manipulation of the royal court, and control of ecclesiasti- cal institutions—solidified Pippin's power throughout the king- dom. However, his preoccupation with Austrasia and Neustria provided the dukes in the more peripheral areas of Francia the opportunity to attempt the same process of control and consoli- dation in their areas. Moreover, his death in 714 and that of his son Grimoald II opened the way for a violent conflict among the members of his family for succession, threatening to tear down the entire edifice he had so carefully constructed over the preceding three decades.

In early 714 Pippin, sensing that he was nearing the end of his life, sent for Grimoald, his son and designated successor as

maior domus. On his way to see his father at Jupille, Grimoald was assassinated in the Basilica of St. Lambert in Liège. Pippin himself died a few months later, leaving a disputed succession and the last opportunity the anti-Pippinid faction would have to assert its independence. The result was three years of war followed by six years of desperate political maneuvering, during which the three-pronged power base constructed by Pippin largely collapsed, to be replaced by his eventual successor, Charles Martel.

Pippin left three possible successors. Pippin's own choice was Theudoald, the minor son of Grimoald, whom Pippin had entrusted to his widow, Plectrude. Second, there were the sons of Pippin's son Drogo, who had died in 708, including Hugo, who by 714 was a priest, Arnulf, Pippin, and Godefrid, the latter two minors. Finally there was Charles, known to history as Martel ("the hammer"), the only adult surviving son of Pippin. However he was not the son of Plectrude but of one of Pippin's concubines, or perhaps an additional wife in the Frankish tradition. In any case, Plectrude imprisoned Charles and established Theudoald as *maior* in Neustria and Arnulf as duke in the area of Metz.

Within a short time, Neustrian aristocrats seized the opportunity to revolt, rallying around Childebert III's son Dagobert III (711–715). They defeated the Pippinids near Compiègne, putting Theudoald to flight. He died shortly after the battle, and the Neustrians elected one of their own, Ragamfred, as *maior*. Ragamfred concluded alliances with the Frisians to the north and the Aquitainian duke Eudo in order to crush the Pippinids and move east toward Metz. Charles escaped the captivity of his stepmother and began to organize his Austrasian supporters in his defense against the Neustrians. Dagobert in the meantime died and the Neustrians found a son of Childeric II, a cleric named Daniel, and made him king under the name Chilperic II. For his part, Charles found his own Merovingian, Chlothar IV.

Supporters flocked to the Neustrians from throughout Francia, from the area of Rouen, Amiens, Cambrai, the Paris region, upper Burgundy, Alemannia, and from as far away as Provence and Bavaria. Chilperic II's court became a gathering

place for all groups which sought to check Pippinid ambition, more to protect their own autonomy than to support the Merovingian dynasty.

Charles had to fight against both Plectrude and the Neustrians. However in 717 he was able to defeat his stepmother and the following year overcame the Neustrians at Soissons. At last Charles was able to move into Neustria and begin the process of consolidating his family's power.

This reconsolidation required roughly five years and was a painstaking process, reestablishing control city by city across Neustria and Burgundy. The primary means by which he accomplished this was through his use of monastic and episcopal offices. The result was not only a firmly established *princeps* in the kingdom, but a new kind of church and a new culture. Perhaps this, more than anything else, marked a break with late antique traditions of local control and would come to characterize the Carolingian age. However, before we examine the cultural and religious transformations under Charles we must turn to the changes of the other regions of Francia during this period of political unrest.

Formation of Territorial Kingdoms

When the *maior domus* Bercharius had been killed Pippin the younger, son of Ansegisel, came from Austrasia and succeeded him in the office [principatus] of *maior domus*. From this time forth the kings began to have the [royal] name but not the dignity [honorem]. . . . At that time Godafred, duke of the Alemanni and certain other dukes around him refused to obey the dukes of the Franks, because they were no longer able to serve the Merovingian kings as they were formerly accustomed to do, and therefore each kept to himself.[8]

The ninth-century author who penned this portrayed the relationship between the Pippinids and the other dukes of Francia perhaps more accurately than he knew. The office of *maior* had indeed become a princely position. Prior to the seventh century, the term *princeps* had referred only to imperial or royal office. Now increasingly *maiores* were claiming sovereignty. However,

the same diminishing of royal power combined with the consolidation of regional power that pushed the *maiores* of Neustria and Austrasia toward quasiroyal status was having the same effect on dukes in other areas. In Thuringia, Frisia, Aquitaine, Alemannia, and Bavaria the *maiores* were becoming more independent. By the early eighth century, even bishops were exercising a *principatum* in their territories. As their common bond, a relationship with a powerful Merovingian king, disappeared, such independent lords felt no similar allegiance to the Pippinids, who were at best their equals, and in many cases their social inferiors.

Each of the peripheral regions of the Frankish world had its own particular social and political organization, and each related to the center in different ways. We shall examine three of the most important—Aquitaine, Provence, and Bavaria—as examples of the process taking place across Francia.

Aquitaine

Aquitaine was the region with the greatest continuity of Roman culture and society. It was also the richest region of Francia, and its geographic position bordering the Visigothic kingdom and the Basques made it of vital strategic importance.

The links with Roman society and culture were extremely strong in Aquitaine, where language, social organization, and religious culture continued much as they had in the sixth century. The great estates populated by slaves and *coloni*, which had characterized the agrarian and social organization of the region since the fifth century, continued without major interruption. Estimates of the size of some of these estates, termed *fundus*, have them almost as large as a modern French department; smaller ones might still reach the size of a modern commune. In the course of the seventh century, these estates if anything gained in size, as magnates expanded their holdings through purchase, exchange, and inheritance.

At the same time, Aquitaine continued to have smaller free tenures. During the sixth century, plague, introduced through the port of Marseille, had ravaged the region as far north as

Orléans before subsiding. Its effects had been severe depopula-
tion and the loss of arable land due to the lack of labor. Now,
in the later seventh century, the population slowly began to
rise, and peasants were encouraged to cultivate abandoned land
belonging to the fisc, to magnates, and to the ecclesiastical insti-
tutions. The arrangements with these free peasants were such that
they could return land to cultivation and thereby obtain part
of it as their own. As a result, the agrarian wealth of the region
was slowly growing, providing a basis on which to develop au-
tonomy and making Aquitaine a prize worth fighting for.

The riches of Aquitaine, not only its agricultural produce but
also its salt, wood, furs, marble, lead, iron, and silver mines, had
long made it a valued Frankish possession. We have seen that
at every division of the kingdom, each king had received a por-
tion of Aquitaine. In turn, these kings had been extremely
generous to the great monasteries and churches of the north
with grants of property, incomes, and tariff exemptions in the
region. Le Mans, Metz, Cologne, Reims, Paris, and Châlons,
among other northern bishoprics, had extensive holdings in
Aquitaine, as did monasteries such as St.-Wandrille, St.-Denis,
Corbie, and Stavelot. This northern presence in the south in-
sured constant interaction between the laity and ecclesiastical
magnates of both regions.

The northern presence in the south was paralleled by a
strong Aquitainian presence in the north. Since Clovis, southern
senatorial aristocrats had played key roles in the courts of Mero-
vingians, had provided important bishops to the north, and had
made political and marriage alliances throughout Francia. Thus,
without denying the peculiar character of the region and its
essential *Romanitas,* one can place too much emphasis on the
Roman character of the region's aristocracy. While the smaller
and middling landholders no doubt looked to their local tradi-
tions, the great aristocracy was part of both worlds, moving freely
from one to the other and able to use their wide connections to
participate in the political and cultural movements of the entire
Frankish kingdom. True, they were "Romans," but primarily in
the same sense that the people north of the Loire, regardless of
"ethnic" ancestry, had come to consider themselves and to be
considered Franks. Just as "Frank" had become a geographic

description, "Roman" tended to mean an inhabitant of the south. From the first third of the seventh century, these "Romans" sought increasingly the same sort of autonomy desired in other regions of Francia.

This desire for autonomy was aided by the continuing need for security from the Basques or Gascons. We have seen that Dagobert had established his half brother Charibert II in a small Aquitainian kingdom as an outpost from which to control the Basques. Ebroin did essentially the same around 650, when he apparently established an aristocrat from Toulouse named Felix as patrician and gave him the *principatum* "over all the cities as far as the Pyrenees and over that most evil people, the Basques."[9] In effect, he reestablished the border kingdom of Charibert with a nonroyal official holding the *principatum*. After the death of Felix, his successor, Lupus, in the midst of the confusion following the death of Childeric II, claimed sovereignty and even a royal throne.

Although Lupus apparently died a year later, it appears that the de facto autonomy of Aquitaine continued well into the eighth century. The next Aquitainian duke we hear of is Eudo, styled "prince of the Aquitainians." Nothing is known of his origins or background. His name suggests a Neustrian origin however, and it is quite likely that he had both Neustrian and Aquitainian connections on which to build and consolidate his position. This is typical of independent "princes" of the time across Francia. During the period of gradual Pippinid consolidation in the north and the fight over Pippin's succession that followed his death in 714, Eudo was able to expand his independent principality north and east. Neustrian opponents of the Pippinids, led by the *maior* Ragamfred and his Merovingian Chilperic II, found an ally in Eudo. As long as he was facing only Basques to the southwest, a divided Gothic kingdom to the southeast, and a disordered Frankish world to the north, he could maintain virtual independence. This equilibrium was destroyed by the sudden collapse of Visigothic Spain before the Islamic invasion of 710–711.

The collapse of Spain was rapid and complete. After the destruction of King Rodrigas at the battle of Guadaleta in 711, resistance disintegrated across the country. By 719 Septimania

had fallen, and by 721 a Moslem army was besieging Toulouse. Here it was stopped by Eudo and his Aquitainians, reinforced by Basque contingents, who effected a crushing defeat on the Moslem army. Eudo seems to have received for this victory recognition from Pope Gregory II, who was looking for alliances with important princes outside Italy both to protect the West from Islam and, possibly more important, as potential allies against the Langobards. Then followed a period of consolidation and peace, during which time Eudo apparently contracted a treaty with the rebellious Berber commander of the strategic Cerdagne region, giving the Berber his daughter in marriage. Presumably he realized that in the future his major threat might come from the north and he needed Moslem neutrality, if not support.

Ten years later, Pippin II's son and successor, Charles Martel, had established his position in the north sufficiently to allow him to look to the other subkingdoms and independent territories of the Frankish world. In 731 he invaded Aquitaine and carried off a great amount of booty. This left Eudo in an impossible position. His ally in the Cerdagne had previously been eliminated by the governor of Spain, leaving him without Moslem support. The following year the governor of Spain, Abd ar-Raḥmān, taking advantage of Aquitaine's exposed position, invaded Gascony and Aquitaine, raiding as far north as Bordeaux and Poitiers. When Eudo attempted to stop him, the Aquitainian army was destroyed, and he was forced to ask Charles Martel for assistance. The resulting Frankish victory between Poitiers and Tours not only checked the Moslem advance north of the Pyrenees, but meant the beginning of the end of Aquitainian independence. Eudo was reduced to the position of Charles's client, and subsequent attempts by his sons and successors to reassert their independence following Charles's death in 741 and that of his son Pippin III in 768 were brutally crushed.

Provence

The pattern, as in Aquitaine, of aristocrats with at once local and Frankish connections taking advantage of the disintegration

of central authority to establish independent lordships, the use of a Merovingian as a figure around whom to rally "loyalist" support, and alliance with powers outside Francia for protection against the Pippinids, was repeated across the perimeter of Francia. In Provence, the same process developed in the last third of the seventh century.

Here the patricians Antenor and Maurontus, the latter quite possibly a distant kinsman of the Neustrian *maior* Waratto, were able to take advantage of the situation to establish themselves in autonomous positions vis-à-vis the Pippinids. However, this independence apparently did not extend to the Merovingians themselves, especially Childebert III. Antenor was one of the magnates present at Childebert's court in 697 when Drogo was defeated in his attempt to use his marriage connections to increase his family property. Childebert seems to have been a rallying point for anti-Pippinid opposition throughout Francia. As we shall see, not only did the Provençal rebel attend his court and assist in defeating the Pippinids, but members of his court would later be found in areas hostile to Pippin and his successors.

This ostensible Merovingian support seems to have continued to a limited extent under Childebert's successor Chilperic II, who managed for a short time to organize opposition to Charles Martel. Even during the periods of apparent rebellion, Chilperic apparently maintained some influence over customs officers in Marseille and Fos and was able to guarantee the traditional immunities that St.-Denis enjoyed there. These Provençal patricians seem to have wanted to establish independent lordships along the same model as that of the Pippinids themselves—they pledged their loyalty to the legitimate Merovingian king, attended his court, and recognized his authority over some important aspects of the fisc. On the other hand, they were no more ready than was Pippin or later, Charles Martel, to accept Merovingian rule.

Princes such as Antenor and Maurontus based their power both on their local ties in society and on their control of ecclesiastical and secular offices. Marriages, inheritances, and land transactions over the decades had established such men in con-

trol of vast estates througout the regions in which they were active. These estates, often consisting, in the Rhône valley, of relatively isolated farmsteads as well as larger *fundus,* were worked by slaves under the control and direction of *coloni* who themselves were often freedmen, that is, former slaves or the descendants of slaves who had been emancipated by their masters. Such freedpersons seem to have been the key to local control. While the status of freedperson in the classical period had been an intermediate position and the children born of freedpersons were considered free, by the seventh century the status had become a permanent, inheritable one. Descendants of emancipated slaves, usually established on a plot of land or even given several such plots to cultivate with the assistance of slaves, continued under considerable financial and moral obligations to the families of their former masters. Although technically free in relation to others, they risked being reduced once more to slavery if they did not meet their special obligations to their masters. Thus they were particularly suited for the management of great landholders' estates, for conducting their business, and in general for providing that direct link between their patrons and the general society.

At the other end of the social spectrum, magnates controlled offices such as those of count and duke or patrician, as well as local offices that had originated in particular provincial civic tradition. They also controlled episcopal offices, with rival families competing city by city for episcopal control and willing to assassinate incumbents if necessary to achieve their ends. Churches and monasteries were particularly important as sources of wealth to divide among their followers in order to secure their loyalty. In Marseille, Antenor confiscated the estates of the monastery of St.-Victor and ordered the abbot to place on the high altar all the records of landholdings so that these could be burned, thus preventing any attempt by subsequent abbots to reassert their rights to the property. Charles Martel's much-discussed policy of confiscating church lands to reward his supporters was but the continuation of a strategy employed by many of the "princes" of the early eighth century.

This competition within Provence, as within other regions, worked ultimately to the advantage of Pippin and Charles Martel. If Antenor and Maurontus sought to establish themselves as princes, this would have to be at the expense of other local magnates, and thus they found themselves facing not only the Pippinids but also local rivals, often equally well-connected regionally and internationally. In Provence, the competition came from the clan of the Burgundian-Juran Waldelenus, discussed earlier, from the region of Besançon. By the late seventh century this group, with close ties to Austrasia, had married into the family which controlled the important Alpine passes into Italy centered on Susa, Gap, and Embrun. In the first third of the eighth century the head of this family, Abbo, led the local opposition to Maurontus.

These local rivalries resulted in feuds carried out over generations, and in time each party looked for external allies to help them tip the balance in their favor. In the 720s and 730s, Maurontus looked to the Moslems of Septimania and invited the Wali of Narbonne into Provence to assist him, while Abbo cooperated with Charles Martel, who conducted a series of expeditions into the lower Rhône. As in Spain and in Aquitaine, the Moslems quickly attempted to push aside their erstwhile allies and occupy the region. Charles used the situation to present himself as the champion of Christianity, expel the Septimanian Moslems, and assume control of the region, establishing his local ally Abbo as *patricius,* and strengthening Abbo's position with property confiscated from his opponents, termed rebels in the pro-Carolingian sources.

However, Charles was not content to establish an ally and then allow him to begin again the process which might lead to yet another separatist movement. Abbo, who may have allied fairly late with Charles, was perhaps allowed to become *patricius* because he had no legitimate heirs. Upon his death, he left all of his estates, the accumulated wealth of generations of family strategists as well as the rewards of faithful service to Charles, to his family monastery, Novalesa, in the area now known as the Italian Piedmont. With Abbo's death, this monastery passed,

like the great Neustrian monasteries would do, under the direct
control of the Carolingians, placing them at the pinnacle of re-
gional power.

Bavaria

The one major region not absorbed into the Pippinid orbit in
the early eighth century was Bavaria. Bavaria, located at the cru-
cial intersection of the Frankish, Langobard, Slavic and Avar
worlds, had long been developing into an autonomous region
under its Agilolfing dukes. The ability of the Agilolfings to ex-
pand their territory and act autonomously depended to a great
extent on their ability to maintain an equilibrium with their
neighbors and to unite the disparate peoples in their "king-
dom." At times of strong central Frankish power, as under Dago-
bert I, Bavaria had no choice but to submit to Merovingian au-
thority, especially because of the threat posed by the Slavic king-
dom of Samo, and the Avars, successors to the Huns in Pan-
nonia. When these neighbors were weak, as after the death of
Samo (c. 660), the Bavarians were quick to take advantage of
the situation by extending their control as far as the Vienna
woods. But when the neighbors were strong, as was the Lango-
bard duke of Trent twenty years later, the Bavarians were forced
to retreat, in this instance from the region of Bozen in south
Tyrol. Likewise, the Avars, freed from the threat of Samo's king-
dom, were able to push as far as Lorsh on the Enns River,
leaving the region between the Inns and the Vienna woods a sort
of Avar-patrolled no-man's-land.

The Agilolfings based their growing autonomy in part on
their control of the surviving fiscal lands, which seem in some
regions of Bavaria to have survived from late antiquity, and on
the remains of Roman administrative organization. This is most
clearly seen in their court at Regensburg, which they established
in the former Roman *pretorium,* or governor's residence, of that
city.

The territorial expansion and political unification of the poly-
ethnic population was closely related to its religious unification,
and competition for the lead in missionary activity and political

hegemony went hand in hand. At the beginning of the seventh century, the population of the region included not only Alpine Romans who had remained orthodox Christians, but also pagan Celts and Slavs and Arian Germanic groups. The strategies of conversion were as diverse as the peoples to be converted.

First, isolated Christian communities, such as Salzburg, provided continuity with late antique Christianity. The extent of this continuity is difficult to determine, but unlike other Germanic regions, the conversion of Bavaria was not entirely an imported phenomenon but rather had indigenous roots.

The second unique aspect of Bavarian Christianity was its ancient connections with northern Italy, especially with Verona. These connections, too, dated to late antiquity, and instead of destroying them by establishing the Bavarian duchy under the Franks, the early Frankish conquests in northern Italy actually strengthened these ties. Under the Agilolfings, the duke's close familial ties to the Langobard royal·family ensured that these connections continued.

Iro-Frankish monasticism entered Bavaria via Luxeuil. The first representatives of the tradition were Abbot Eustasius and the monk Agrestius, who undertook missionary activities in Bavaria during the first third of the seventh century. Their activities and those of others, such as Saint Emmeram, were, just as in the West, part of a Frankish effort to establish not simply Christianity but a society firmly tied to Francia. The Bavarian dukes needed this form of Christianity for their own consolidation. However they continued to fear it, with reason, as a "fifth column" that threatened to undermine their autonomy because of the continuing strong ties of these clerics and the institutions they founded with the West, particularly with Austrasia.

Not surprisingly then, when, in the early eighth century the Bavarian duke Theodo began to take advantage of the power vacuum in Francia to structure his duchy into a centralized monarchy, he looked not to the West for assistance in organizing a church but to the south. In 716 he visited Rome and sought the assistance of Pope Gregory II to organize a regular ecclesiastical hierarchy. This Bavarian-papal alliance prefigured both that of Eudo of Aquitaine and Charles Martel.

Not only was Bavaria becoming a truly independent subking-
dom, but in the late seventh century it was increasingly a center
of refuge for the enemies of the Pippinids. The most significant
of these was Bishop Rupert of Worms, who apparently exiled
himself around 694 from the Merovingian court and went to
Regensburg, where he was received by Theodo and granted the
right to establish an episcopal see in the old Roman town of
Salzburg. Later Rupert returned to the West, presumably to
participate in the short-lived opposition formed around Chil-
peric II.

Unlike the other independent kingdoms of the late seventh
and early eighth centuries, Bavaria maintained its independence
into the reign of Charlemagne. The reasons for this were the
distance of Bavaria from the center of Carolingian power, the
successful manner in which the dukes maintained their alliances
with the Langobards and at times with the Avars, and the other
more pressing problems which faced Pippin and his successors.

The other regions of Francia generally followed the pattern of
Aquitaine and Provence, rather than of Bavaria. The Frisians,
Alemanni, and Thuringians were all brought under the lord-
ship of Charles Martel. The long process had been costly and
destructive. In Aquitaine, Burgundy, and Provence the physical
effects of Charles's conquest were felt for generations. But in
the cultural transformation of European society, the effects
were felt even longer.

Effects on Society

The West had known episcopal lordships since antiquity, when
bishops such as the fifth-century Germanus of Auxerre had
proven more capable than the local Bagaudae in protecting
the community from an often hostile and indifferent world.
However, between 700 and 730 the nature of episcopal lordship
had been radically transformed. Consider the brief account con-
tained in the near-contemporary history of the bishops of Auxerre
of the life of Germanus's successor, bishop Savaric, discussed
previously:

Savaric . . . was, as it is reported, of very high birth. He began to turn aside a little from the status of his order and to covet secular cares more than was appropriate for a bishop to such an extent that he subjected to himself by force of arms the districts of Orléans, Nevers, Tonnerre, and the Avallonais. Putting aside the episcopal dignity this bishop raised a great army, but when he marched on Lyon to conquer it by force of arms he was struck down by divine lightning and died instantly.[10]

At least Savaric had been a bishop. His successor Hainmar, termed *vocatus episcopus,* apparently never bothered with ordination or consecration. He is said to have held his *principatum* for fifteen years before his "martyrdom" when attempting to escape from Charles Martel, whom he had been accused of betraying in a conspiracy with Eudo of Aquitaine. These warrior-bishops, or more appropriately, warriors who held bishoprics, were a far cry from the political bishops of the sixth century or even those such as Arnulf of Metz and Leodegar of Autun.

The radical change in the episcopacy was not that bishops had become key figures in the struggle for political dominance or that their sees were seen as private property and used as bulwarks for family territorial organization. Nor was their willingness to take active roles in the bloody fighting of the eighth century novel. All of this was part of the long tradition of the episcopacy and stands condemned only in the anachronistic perceptions of later ecclesiastical propagandists. Episcopal dynasties existed even in the fifth and sixth centuries, and bishops had been deeply involved in politics before the arrival of the Franks.

What was radically new was that in contrast to earlier episcopal power, which had been based not only on secular connections but also and always on the bishop's role as representative and custodian of divine power, the new type of bishop was primarily or even exclusively a secular magnate. The power of earlier bishops came from their control of access to sacred places and objects as well as from family wealth and connections, and they embodied late Roman cultural traditions, assuming such traditional civic duties as social relief and the maintenance of peace within their communities. But the new bishops' power

and prestige came exclusively from their control of the material resources of one or more dioceses.

Savaric and Hainmar were not exceptions. In the first third of the eighth century, the bishop, the most fundamental institution of late antiquity and the primary representative of *Romanitas,* was rapidly being transformed almost beyond recognition. And no party made greater use of this than Charles Martel. His own cousin Hugo was simultaneously bishop of Rouen. Bayeux, and Paris, as well as, quite probably, Lisieux, Avranches, and Evreux, while holding offices of abbot of St.-Wandrille, St.-Dennis, and Jumièges. Pluralism of this sort became increasingly common. At Trier a son succeeded his father as bishop not only of that city but of Laon and Reims as well, although it is unclear whether either had been ordained. After Hugo's death, the process of secularization of episcopal and monastic office advanced even further. His successors in Rouen and St.-Wandrille were not even literate.

Charles's use of the episcopacy and of monasteries was the hallmark of his process of consolidation in Neustria. His father's methods of solidifying his position—absorption of other clans into his, the manipulation of the royal court, and the assumption of protection over the monastic church—had been insufficient. Attempts to absorb the Neustrian maioral family and its allies had proven in the long run unsuccessful. The royal court had turned vicious as Merovingians had proved themselves capable of still acting independently and making common cause with the opposition; thus their courts could no longer be a stage for political maneuvering. The church would therefore be the focus of Charles's new consolidation, but not in the way his father had attempted. It would be a new church, controlled by his kinsmen and most trusted associates, without regard for religious or educational formation, local cultural traditions, and the niceties of episcopal election or consecration.

The one institution Charles treated with respect and caution was St.-Denis. The enormous holdings of the basilica were the key to the control of Neustria, as he was well aware. St.-Denis had supported Ragamfred against Charles, and after 717 he moved cautiously to secure it, making his nephew Hugo its

abbot, but also protecting its far-flung property rights from others and enriching it with the grant of the remaining portions of the great Merovingian villa of Clichy-Ruvray, an estate estimated at over 2,000 hectares. This grant made St.-Denis by far the largest property holder in the region of Paris. Of course, by this time, it pertained as well to Charles as to St.-Denis—so close was the connection between him and the monastery that he had his son Pippin III educated there and was himself buried under the porch of the basilica when he died in 741.

This new religious situation, certainly not initiated by Charles but promoted by him, was decisive for the cultural and religious life of Francia. The destructive wars of pacification and the transformation of the episcopacy eliminated the cultivation of letters that had so long been associated with episcopal culture. Ravaged by the armies of Charles and his son Pippin III, Aquitaine ceased to be a center of learning, as did Provence. The tradition of literate laymen virtually died out, as did their role in the royal and maioral chancelleries. Writing became a virtual monopoly of the clergy, and as a result the use of writing, so important throughout Merovingian history, decreased accordingly.

Viewed from the perspective of Roman cultural tradition and Gallo-Roman civic identity, the results were no doubt disastrous. However, in effect Charles Martel accomplished what no other secular power had been able to do in the previous two centuries. By his manipulation of ecclesiastical office, by the confiscation of the wealth it controlled, and by the appointment of ignorant and entirely worldly lay supporters, he finally succeeded in destroying the religious basis on which had long rested the independent power of the Frankish episcopate. Henceforth medieval bishops would be powerful lords, at times rivaling in power dukes, counts, and even kings. They would never again command that particular power as monopolists of the sacred as they had in previous centuries. This role, along with the lead in cultural life, would pass to monasteries.

From the tabula rasa of early eighth-century religious culture, Charles and his successors built a new kind of episcopal and monastic edifice and simultaneously a new religious basis for

their own lordship. The pillars of this edifice were Anglo-Saxon missionaries and the Roman pope.

The Anglo-Saxon Missions

The early seventh century had been the great period of Irish influence on the Continent, due to the efforts of Columbanus and many less famous Irish pilgrims who found their way to the Continent after him and helped extend Iro-Frankish Christianity, in close cooperation with the aristocracy. Now, beginning in the lifetime of Pippin II, Anglo-Saxons came increasingly to replace the Irish as the most active missionaries and reformers in Francia. A world of difference separated these two groups. First, by the later seventh century, England had a firmly established episcopal hierarchy imposed by papal agents, rather than either the monastic, decentralized church of Ireland (itself waning by this time) or an indigenous tradition of local churches as was the case in Francia. Second, the Anglo-Saxon church had been established in close cooperation with Anglo-Saxon kings. The bishops and abbots were accustomed to close cooperation with and control by the kings of the territories in which they worked. Finally, Anglo-Saxon monasticism was essentially Benedictine. Augustine of Canterbury and many of his companions had been monks, and the spread of Roman episcopal Christianity in the island had been intimately connected to the Benedictine monastic expansion, reinforced by Benedict Biscop in his great monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow. It was this Roman Benedicine form of Christianity that the Anglo-Saxon missionaries introduced to the Continent.

The earliest Anglo-Saxon missionaries, Wilfrid and Willibrord, concentrated on Frisia, establishing the essential political character of theirs and subsequent missions. Wilfrid, bishop of York, had been deposed by the archbishop of Canterbury Theodore for objecting to the division of Wilfrid's huge diocese, and was on his way to Rome via the Rhineland (his assistance in arranging the return of Dagobert II had made him persona non grata in Neustria) when he first arrived among the Frisians. His successor Willibrord arrived in 690 and began his work under

the protection of Pippin in those areas that had been recconquered by the Franks. One of the first things he did was to travel to Rome to obtain papal sanction for his activities. This would have been unthinkable for a Frankish clergyman, but seemed only natural to Anglo-Saxons.

The process of Christianizing the Frisians and subduing them militarily went hand in hand. Conversion meant conversion to Frankish Christianity and thus a radical break with their own autonomous social and political past. The Frisians understood this well. The story was told that Duke Radbod was taking religious instruction and nearing the point to be baptized when he asked Willibrord whether his ancestors were in heaven or hell. The orthodox response was that they were surely in hell because they had been pagans, but the duke would no doubt achieve heaven after baptism. On hearing this Radbod refused baptism, saying he could not do without the company of his ancestors in the next life.[11]

Willibrord lived to be over eighty, dying in 739. In theory he had become the head of an autonomous metropolitan see directly under the pope. Pippin had sent him to Rome to be consecrated archbishop of the Frisians, and thus he established a new metropolitan see on the model of the English church. He had envisioned a vast missionary project extending throughout Frisia and into Denmark and Saxony. In reality, he was only successful where Pippin and later Charles controlled the territory. Elsewhere he met with total failure. Moreover, after his death, his ecclesiastical province was swallowed up into the Frankish church.

Willibrord's more famous successor and countryman, Wynfrid, known as Boniface, the name given him by the pope, met the same limits on his efforts. Although he first focused on Frisia, Boniface soon found his calling east of the Rhine. Like Willibrord, he traveled to Rome to secure papal authorization for his mission and in 719 was commissioned to preach to "the gentiles," presumably meaning the Thuringians. After initial successes there, he returned to Rome in 722 to be consecrated bishop, and again in 738 to receive the commission to organize the church in Bavaria and Alemannia. Although known as "The Apostle

to the Germans," much of Boniface's missionary work took place in regions already Christian for generations. Iro-Frankish missionaries, wandering bishops, and aristocrats from across the Rhine had already established Christian communities in large parts of Alemannia, Thuringia, and especially in Bavaria. But these were not organized into a single church and they did not all follow Roman tradition. Boniface sought to change this. In addition, these churches were not instruments of Carolingian political control. Although this last issue was not of paramount importance to Boniface, it was to his Carolingian supporters.

These changes did not meet with universal approval, especially from such perfectly orthodox if non-Roman churchmen as Bishop Virgil of Salzburg, a brilliant Irishman who stubbornly resisted being forced into Roman conformity. In every instance, Boniface was eager to enforce a strict interpretation of Roman institutional structure and Roman moral and religious tradition on the areas of his mandate. The results, where enforced by Charles Martel or, after his death, by Pippin III and Carlomann, were considerable, although this secular assistance was brought to bear more often against autonomous opponents than against immoral, unqualified, or unworthy bishops who had been appointed by the Carolingians themselves.

Boniface's genuine concern for his mission and his tremendous organizational skills proved fruitful. He established Benedictine monasteries as points of acculturation and bishoprics as centers of ecclesiastical control in Hesse, Thuringia, and Franconia. The value of his form of centralized church was even appreciated by the still-independent Duke Odilo of Bavaria, who invited him to organize the Bavarian church. When Willibrord died his province was incorporated into Boniface's area of jurisdiction. By 742 he was recognized as the "Archbishop of the East," metropolitan of an enormous, well-organized, and increasingly reform-minded hierarchical system.

The extent to which this organizational activity benefited Charles and his successors was considerable. By 742 it was possible to call a council of all the bishops of the Austrasian regions under the authority of Charles's son Carlomann. This council, which met to establish a strict hierarchical order within the

church, set the style for future church assemblies. Called in the spring to coincide with the annual military muster or "Mayfield," participants included not only bishops but secular magnates as well. Moreover, the decrees of the synods were promulgated, not in the names of the bishops themselves as had been the tradition since antiquity, but in the name of Carlomann. This pattern was soon followed by a synod in the West held in 744 at which a similar program was enacted and the groundwork was laid for the construction of a Western church on the Austrasian model. In 745 and 747 councils of the whole Frankish church were held under similar conditions. Through their support of the missionary bishop, the Carolingians had gained control of a well-disciplined, effective instrument of central control.

Along with the work of reforming the episcopal church, Boniface, a lifelong devotee of Benedictine monasticism, worked to found monasteries and reform others in which the rule of Saint Benedict rather than the Iro-Frankish or Gallo-Roman traditions prevailed. Here too he received enormous support from Charles and his sons. The extent of the spread of Benedictine monasticism at the expense of the older forms marked the growing range of Carolingian control in the Frankish world.

However, for all his service to the Carolingians, he was not simply their creature. Had he been, his effect could not have been so great. In 742, when he was recognized as archbishop of the East, he was termed *missus Sancti Petri*, the ambassador of Saint Peter.[12] It was from Rome that he derived his charisma, and it was this charisma that he sought to give to his church.

Unlike the old Merovingian episcopacy, the new religious foundation of the Frankish episcopacy was not founded in the local traditions of aristocratic control or even in the patronage of the local saints. For Charles's political bishops, it was clear they needed nothing but the *maior*'s support. But Boniface and his suffragans were still outsiders, appointed by the pope or chosen by the Anglo-Saxon missionary monk; they could not look to indigenous sacred traditions. They had to import them, primarily from Rome.

Thus the eighth century saw not just the establishment of Roman-style bishops and monasteries throughout Francia, but

also the wholesale importation of Roman saints' relics into these new churches. The initiative for this came largely from Rome. In 739 Pope Gregory III sent Charles Martel the keys of the tomb of Saint Peter and a portion of the saint's chain. These gifts made a great impression in Francia: "Such things had never been seen or heard of before," comments the later writer of the Fredegar Chronicle.[13] He was wrong. Gifts of keys and fetters from the tomb of Saint Peter had been traditional long before, particularly in England, which the pope sought to firmly attach to the Roman church. Now the same process was being used to chain the Frankish church to Rome. In the process the sacred geography of Western Europe began to change. No longer were the tombs of Gallic martyrs, saintly bishops, or even saintly noble ancestors the central points of contact between heaven and earth. Now these points could be anywhere, they could be moved about, and their power came from Rome.

The New Monarchy

The newly constituted Frankish church was thus built on a sacred foundation radically different from that of its Merovingian predecessor. The transformation of royal sacredness was almost an afterthought. Since 718/19 Charles and successors were firmly in control. The testament of Abbo, written in 739, was even dated "in the twenty-first year that the illustrious Charles has governed the Frankish kingdoms."[14] Several long periods had passed when there had not even been a Merovingian to serve as a figurehead. Before, these figureheads had been necessary, or at least useful, in maintaining the Frankish realm. They embodied and represented the unity of the kingdom and the tradition of Frankish legitimacy within a context of late antiquity.

By the mid century this kind of identity and legitimacy was an anachronism, although it was perhaps still used as an excuse for peripheral magnates to oppose Carolingian rule, as had been the case under Pippin II. But this tradition had never made much sense to the Romans and Anglo-Saxons who had come to transform Francia, and increasingly their alien view of kingship, namely that kings not only reigned but ruled, were coming to

be held by the elite of Francia as well. The Carolingian ecclesiastical system was based on imported Roman sacrality; it was only a matter of time before their own political position would be as well.

The development was gradual, natural, and mutually advantageous to pope and *princeps* alike. Since the early eighth century the popes had been casting about for outside support of their increasingly independent and precarious position vis-à-vis the Langobards in central Italy. The Eastern Empire could no longer provide any serious support, and in any case the popes were not eager for effective control from Constantinople. They had looked to the Bavarians and the Aquitainians, but neither had been as effective as they had hoped. Thus in 739 Pope Gregory III appealed to Charles Martel for assistance, sending him at the same time the relics mentioned above. Gregory's plan was probably for an independent Roman lordship in central Italy under the protection of a distant Frankish prince. Although little came of these initial overtures, they began the long and complex relationship between popes and Carolingians.

In a bit more than a decade, Charles's son Pippin needed papal assistance. After his father's death and his brother's decision in 747 to enter religious life, first in Rome and then at Monte Cassino, Pippin found himself the sole ruler of Francia but not the sole claimant to that position. His half brother Grifo, who had been excluded from the succession, was no less a potential prince than Pippin and was constantly the focus of opposition groups in the peripheral regions of the kingdom. Carlomann had left sons when he entered the monastery who might, in time, threaten Pippin's own heirs. Pippin needed a source of authority distinct from mere political power and superior to that of other Frankish magnates and even his own kinsmen. This he found in the same place that his church had found its sanctity, in Rome.

Thus in 749 or 750 he sent Bishop Burchard of Würzburg and Fulrad, later abbot of St.-Denis, where Pippin had been raised, to ask Pope Zachary, "Was it right or not that the king of the Franks at that time had absolutely no power but nevertheless possessed the royal office?"[15] This was not a Frankish question

but a Roman one, and the response was a foregone conclusion. Thus in 751, "on the command of" Pope Zachary, Pippin was elected king "according to the Frankish custom" and anointed by either Boniface or Frankish bishops. This rite, with its Biblical, Gothic, Irish, and Anglo-Saxon precedents, was an innovation in Francia—never before had a king been confirmed in his office by ecclesiastical ritual. Merovingian blood and the symbolism of their long hair had been enough. The last Merovingian, Childeric III, no longer useful even as an anachronistic symbol, was tonsured and removed to a monastery, where he spent the remainder of his life.

The Legacy of
Merovingian Europe

> The descendants of Clovis had lost the inheritance of his martial and ferocious spirit; and their misfortune or demerit has affixed the epithet of *lazy* to the last kings of the Merovingian race. They ascended the throne without power, and sunk into the grave without a name. A country palace, in the neighborhood of Compiègne, was allotted for their residence or prison: but each year, in the month of March or May, they were conducted in a wagon drawn by oxen to the assembly of the Franks, to give audience to foreign ambassadors and to ratify the acts of the mayor of the palace.

Thus Edward Gibbon described the last Merovingians in his great *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.[1] He was being kind: traditionally most historians have suggested that the decline of the Merovingians was due largely to their personal depravity, congenital degeneracy, or both. The glorious brutality and faithless cruelty of Clovis and his successors was seen to have been followed by the impotence, passivity, and incompetence of his last heirs. The family has not gained much favorable appreciation in the past 1,200 years. Moreover, the whole period from the victory at Soissons to the anointing of Pippin has been an epoch with which heirs of the European tradition have been acutely uncomfortable.

While every country in the West seems eager to claim Charles the Great (Charlemagne, Karl der Grosse, Carlo magno) as their own, and pan-Europeanists term him the "Father of Europe," Clovis and even Dagobert are largely unclaimed. In Germany, generations of study of the tribal duchies and their origins have

sought continuity between the migration period and the duchies which emerged with the dissolution of the Carolingian Empire. Scholars have tended to forget that these tribal duchies were artificial creations of the Merovingians and their agents.

In France, national memory jumps from the Gallo-Roman period of Syagrius (or perhaps even before, from the time of Asterix) to the glory of Charlemagne. A long tradition, nourished by three disastrous Franco-German wars, has encouraged the French to forget that before there was a "douce France" there was a "Frankono lant," and that this Frankish land was centered in the lower Seine. "Les Francs sont-ils nos ancêtres?"* reads the title of the lead article in a recent issue of the popular French journal *Histoire et Archéologie*.[2] Through most of European history, the general desire on both sides of the Rhine has been to answer "no."

This disinclination to acknowlodge the continuity between the Merovingian period and later European history is the result of a variety of factors. The first and most obvious is the tendency to accept in an uncritical manner the anti-Merovingian propaganda created and disseminated by the Carolingians and their supporters, which was intended to undermine the prestige of the Merovingian royal family. Too often this unflattering view of the Merovingians has been taken at face value and accepted as an accurate assessment of the dynasty and, in particular, its inglorious end.

This portrait of the Merovingian family explains why subsequent dynasties did not wish to be associated with it, but does not explain the negative view of the entire period. Perhaps a reason is offered by the peculiar nature of the society, culture, and institutions of the Merovingian period. The world we have been examining was at all times deeply rooted in late antiquity, a world little understood in comparison with earlier or subsequent periods. We must examine both of these factors in order to understand the negative image of the Merovingian period in European history.

* Are the Franks our Ancestors?

The Rois Fainéants

Gibbon's description of the last Merovingians was largely derived from that of Einhard, the biographer of Charlemagne who began his life of the great emperor with a description of the Merovingians, dismissing them by trivializing them. According to Einhard, long before Childeric III's deposition, the family had lost all power and no longer possessed anything of importance but the title of king. Childeric's duties were to

> sit on the throne, with his hair long and his beard flowing, and act the part of a ruler, giving audience to the ambassadors who arrived from foreign parts and then, when their time of departure came, charging them with answers which seemed to be of his own devising but in which he had in reality been coached or even directed. . . . Whenever he needed to travel, he went in a cart which was drawn in country style by yoked oxen, with a cowherd to drive them. In this fashion he would go to the palace and to the general assembly of his people, which was held each year to settle the affairs of the kingdom, and in this fashion he would return home again.[3]

This image had long been presented by historians of the early eighth century favorable to the rising Carolingians. Already the first continuator of the Chronicle of Fredegar was concerned with reworking the *Liber Historiae Francorum,* a Neustrian chronicle completed in 727 in a way that presented an Austrasian and hence Carolingian perspective. The second continuation, prepared under orders of Charles Martel's half brother Count Childebrand, is even more closely associated with the Carolingian tradition. In these texts we begin to see the characterizations of the Merovingians as they would carry for centuries. Childeric II for example was "altogether too light and frivolous. The scandal and contempt that he aroused stirred up sedition among the Frankish people."[4] This image is not of a particularly dangerous king or a tyrant, but rather of a king who inspires scorn. This frivolity contrasts with the characterizations of men such as Grimoald, "the mildest of men, full of kindness and gentleness; and he was generous in almsgiving and constant in

prayer,"[5] and Charles Martel, "that shrewdest of commanders."[6]

This tradition, which culminated in Einhard, dismisses the Merovigians as ridiculous anachronisms. They are not so much troublesome as they are useless. Of course, one might well dispute this judgment without disputing the essential accuracy of the image. The king with his archaic hairstyle and his ritual oxcart, receiving ambassadors and appearing as a symbol of the unity of Francia at the annual assembly, cannot but remind modern readers of the British monarch in gilded coach, receiving ambassadors and reading annual speeches to Parliament written by the governing party. Symbolic personifications of the kingdom can be extremely useful and important to societies, in spite of the fact that they do not govern, but precisely because their role is outside of politics. Childeric represented the Franks and the Frankish tradition before the Franks and others both in his appearance and no doubt in the manner in which he presided over the annual assembly. Even the oxcart, far from being a sign of rusticity, was an ancient symbol of Frankish identity—since the time of our first-century cattle trader Stelus, Germanic religious and political life had been intimately tied up with livestock. However, appreciation of such a role requires a more subtle understanding of tradition and its role in government than the Carolingians and their increasingly Romanized advisors were capable of.

Their reason for replacing the Merovingians was thus based on a novel and in the long run extremely potent justification. Childeric was not deposed for tyranny, evil, injustice, or any other vice; he was deposed for simple incompetence. Thus, as Edward Peters has pointed out, a new and important category of kingship was introduced into the traditional dichotomy between the just king and the tyrant, that of the useless king, the *rex inutilis*.[7] As the epitome of the useless king, the Merovingians would be remembered through history, not with the fear and loathing which a royal dynasty can accept, but rather with scorn. This scorn for the last Merovingians reflected back upon their predecessors, even the great king Dagobert. The French nursery song, "Le bon Roi Dagobert," conveys the image of a king at once stupid, impotent, and cowardly, who needs his

faithful advisor, in this case Saint Eloi (Eligius of Noyon) to take care of him:

> Le bon roi Dagobert
> Avait sa culotte à l'envers
> Le grand Saint Eloi lui dit: "O mon roi!
> Votre Majesté est mal culottée."
> "C'est vrai," lui dit le roi
> "Je vais la remettre à l'endroit."
>
> Le bon roi Dagobert
> Chassait dans la plaine d'Anvers
> Le grand Saint Eloi lui dit: "O mon roi!
> Votre majesté est bien essouflée!
> "C'est vrai," lui dit le roi
> "Un lapin courait après moi."[8]

A king who cannot even put on his pants without assistance and who runs in terror from rabbits is hardly one to be remembered with respect.

The Carolingian historiographers were extremely successful in creating an image of the preceding dynasty that has been accepted for centuries. Subsequent political apologists could use the image of a dynasty that lost power through incompetence. If a Merovingian could be deposed and sent to a monastery, and a new king elected and consecrated in his place, so too could a Carolingian. In less than a century, this happened to Louis the Pious, Charlemagne's son. More importantly, by the tenth century the replacement of the Carolingian dynasty by the Saxon and particularly by the Capetian dynasties was justified by the same standards applied to the Merovingians. They too were seen as having become *fainéants* and could thus be superseded. Within France and subsequently in England, the tradition of opposition to kings based not only on tyranny but on incompetence would continue well into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although by the end of that century Louis XVI, a *fainéant* par excellence, would be sent not to the monastery but to the guillotine.

The negative image of the Merovingians, created by the Carolingians and constantly renewed for political purposes, explains

the bad light in which the dynasty is viewed, but it is insufficient to explain why the sixth and seventh centuries, those formative periods of Western history, are as little appreciated as Dagobert and Childeric. This attitude is best explained by the alien character of this world and that of late antiquity which produced it. By way of conclusion, we shall examine some of the salient characteristics of this Frankish society.

The Uniqueness of Early Frankish Society

Merovingian civilization lived and died within the framework of late antiquity. Its characteristic political structure remained the kingdom of the imperial German military commander who, by absorbing the mechanism of provincial Roman administration, was able to establish his royal family as the legitimate rulers of the western provinces north of the Pyrenees and the Alps. His rule consisted primarily of rendering justice, that is, of enforcing Roman law and Romanized barbarian law where possible or appropriate within the tradition of his people, and of commanding the Frankish army. The economic basis for his power was on the one hand the vast Roman fisc and on the other the continuing mechanism of Roman taxation. The broader organization of society continued to be based on small communities, the late classical cities, with their local power structures virtually intact. Wherever possible, in the north of Gaul around Soissons, in the Rhineland of Trier and Cologne, or in distant Regensburg and Salzburg, the Merovingians and their agents integrated themselves into these existing Roman structures and derived their power and legitimacy from them. In a relatively short period of time, the warrior bands which had made up the mobile forces of the imperial Germanic commanders became territorially established and integrated into their corresponding indigenous populations. The distinguishing characteristic of this society as opposed to the Goths in Italy and Spain was its adherence to the orthodox Christianity of the indigenous population, making possible the rapid amalgamation of the various communities in Europe. By the eighth century this process was so complete that

it not only had produced a new world but rendered the past virtually opaque to subsequent generations.

An essential characteristic of Francia was the fluidity of the political and cultural identities of its inhabitants. To many modern French, who identify with the Roman cultural tradition as opposed to Germanic conquest and occupation, the Gallo-Roman aristocracy of the Merovingian period were a disappointing lot. Gallo-Romans were ready to defend their Roman cultural tradition even while opposing any attempt by Roman imperial government to interfere with their local control. Thus they willingly and easily made common cause with any barbarian rulers who were prepared to accept them on their own terms. From Caesarius of Arles and Remigius of Reims through Eligius of Noyon and beyond, Romance identity was quite separate from political autonomy. In the political sphere, Aquitainian and Provençal elites acted exactly like their northern counterparts, stubbornly refusing to fit into modern categories of regional political structures based on cultural and ethnic identity and marrying into other elites without any hesitation. In short, in spite of sporadic attempts to portray the south as a region of heroic resistance to Germanic Frankish barbarity, the area's elites appear to the modern French like nothing so much as a society of collaborators.

The Franks of the north are even more perplexing, a curious blend of Germanic-speaking warriors governing through the institutions of a subclassical Roman administration whose primary characteristics, including even kingship, were the product of Roman military and civil tradition. Their pride in being Franks was only matched by their eagerness to serve the Roman state religion, orthodox Christianity, and to win recognition of their legitimacy in the eyes of the Roman emperor in Constantinople. The political fortunes of the Byzantine Empire fill almost as many pages of Merovingian chronicles as do those of Francia. The ease with which the Franks established themselves within a world of Roman cities, international commerce, literate government, written law, and Latin letters without abandoning their cherished feuds, kinship structures, and personal alliances is profoundly disturbing to those who expect the Franks to act

like the Germanic tribes of Tacitus. Small wonder, then, that
when Germans of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
looked back to find their ancient past, they largely bypassed
these Roman Franks in favor of the myth of more authentic
Germanic peoples east of the Rhine.

In reality, of course, both the Romanized kingdoms of Gaul
and western Germany and the "tribal" duchies east of the Rhine
were the creations of the Merovingian world. In both areas, the
intensely local interests at the end of the fifth century developed
first into personal units around individual leaders or influential
families, and then, in the course of the seventh century, these
personal groupings, largely established for military purposes
(for example, to counter the Basques in Aquitaine or the Slavs
in Thuringia), evolved into territorial units that used the vo-
cabulary of ethnic and cultural solidarity for political purposes.
Thus the units of political organization which came to charac-
terize Europe in the tenth and eleventh centuries—Aquitaine,
Burgundy, Provence, "France," in the West; Bavaria, Aleman-
nia, Thuringia, Saxony, in the East—first appeared in the Mero-
vingian period. Although these areas took their names from
preexisting geographical units or personal groups, they received
their institutions, their geographical confines, and their leader-
ship in the course of the seventh century. The Carolingian
period would be but a hiatus in the development of the re-
gionalism of the late Merovingian world.

This profound localism was characteristic of the Merovingian
period because its primary actors, "Frankish" and "Roman"
alike, had been formed within the structures of Gallo-Roman
antiquity and particularly within the provincial city. The shift
of the center of cultural and political focus from city to coun-
tryside coincided with the disappearance of the Merovingian
world. To a great extent, this also meant the shift in religious
authority from the urban world of bishops to the rural monas-
tery, a process already begun in the sixth century but carried to
fruition by Irish and then Anglo-Saxon monks in the seventh
and eighth. The ruralization of the Western Church was paral-
leled by the decay of the city as an economic and political cen-
ter. With the decline in international commerce and the in-

creasing importance of monasteries in the economic life of the West, towns lost their significance as commercial centers to monasteries, of which St.-Denis, with its great fair, is the most important example. Also, the great monasteries such as Corbie, St. Bavon, and Fulda, the monastery of Boniface, became the principal centers for artisanal production and agents of distribution of both primary and manufactured goods. As the political importance of towns decreased, kings and their agents took up principal residence in rural villas rather than in the cities favored by Clovis and his successors. The last Merovingians resided principally at Compiègne, while the Carolingians would spend most of their time at one or another favored rural estate until Charlemagne selected Aachen, an insignificant rural spa, as his primary residence.

The power centers of the Roman Empire had been progressively neglecting the West, a situation that largely suited its population. The language and ritual of international Roman culture was used to emphasize local concerns. This was particularly true in the essential elements of Merovingian power—saints, bishops, kings, and aristocrats. In late antiquity and in the Merovingian period, each of these derived its authority from local, indigenous roots. When these again became dependent on a wider order, the result was a new world.

In the sixth century, religious power was rooted in the local holy man, or even better in his relics. When a young girl from Toulouse possessed by demons was brought to St. Peter's in Rome for exorcism, the demon refused to leave her: it insisted that it could be exorcised only by Remigius of Reims.[9] As Raymond Van Dam has pointed out, Gaul was presented as a direct rival to Rome in the force of its indigenous martyrs and special patrons.[10] The West was prepared to look to its own devices in the religious as well as in the political sphere. By the eighth and early ninth century, Rome was again looking at the West. In the early ninth century a young girl from Aquitaine who was mute and deaf arrived at Seligenstadt, a monastery founded by Einhard in the Rhineland, where her father had brought her after unsuccessfully seeking a cure at many other sanctuaries. Upon entering the basilica, she was seized with violent convulsions,

blood flowed from her mouth and ears, and she fell to the ground. When she was raised up she could speak and hear, and she announced that she had been cured by the saints venerated in the church, Marcellinus and Peter, Roman martyrs whose relics had been recently brought to Francia from Rome.[11]

These two miracles indicate the shift in religious power from the Merovingian to Carolingian worlds. In both cases divine power is manifested through holy men, and in both the location of this action is north of the Alps. However by the end of the Merovingian period this power is mediated through Rome. Marcellinus and Peter had been transplanted to the north, and not to a city but to a rural monastery named paradoxically "the City of the Saints."

This transformation is paralleled, as discussed in the previous chapter, by the transfer of authority from Rome to the bishops of Francia appointed and supervised by Boniface and the Carolingians. The reestablishment of metropolitan sees, and the introduction of Roman usage and norms in the place of indigenous Gallo-Roman and Iro-Frankish ones tied the power of bishops to central rather than to local sources.

The Merovingians had been preeminently the embodiment of local authority. Never needing election or consecration, they were kings by their very nature, quite apart from any external religious or secular authority. The election and anointment of Pippin upon papal approval or even, according to some traditions, papal directive, fundamentally altered the nature of kingship, tying it to a particular religious and institutional tradition quite apart from the old Gallo-Roman and Frankish worlds.

Finally, along with the Carolingians, rose a new "imperial aristocracy" composed of nobles from many different backgrounds. Many were from old Austrasian families; others were from regional elites who had made the Carolingians secure in the various areas of Francia; still others had risen through service to the Carolingians or even to their predecessors but who had joined forces with the winning side at an early date. From this relatively small group of families the Carolingians drew their bishops and counts, whom they sent throughout the empire. Owing their positions to royal favor rather than primarily to local ties, these fami-

lies, no less than Roman saints, Anglo-Saxon bishops, or Carolingian kings, depended on external sources of authority and power. Only after some time would these families intermarry, put down local roots in the areas into which they had been introduced, and produce the regional aristocracies of the High Middle Ages.

Although these transformations had been accomplished in the name of Roman tradition, by the end of the eighth century, when these new elements were firmly in place, little remained of the authentic late Roman West. The Rome that had sponsored Boniface was itself a new, artificial creation, as were the traditions of Latin letters and imperial destiny cultivated in Carolingian circles. And yet the transformed barbarian world so badly needed a Roman imperial tradition, even more than it had in the sixth century, that on Christmas Day in 800 Charles Martel's grandson received the title of emperor and Augustus. The barbarian world, that creature of Rome, had become its creator.

APPENDIX A

The Merovingian Genealogy

CHILDERIC (d. 481)
Basina

CLOVIS (481–511)
Clotild

THEUDERIC I (511–524)	CHLODOMER (511–524) Guntheuc	CHILDEBERT I (511–558)	CLOTHAR I (511–560/1) Radagunda Irgund Aregund Chunsia

THEUDEBERT I
(534–548)
Deuteria
Wisigard

THEUDEBALD
(548–555)
Vuldetrada

	CHARIBERT (561–567) Ingoberg Marcovefa Merofled Theudechild	GUNTHCHRAMN (B 561–593) Veneranda Marcatrude Austrechild	SIGIBERT I (A 561–575) Brunechildis

CHILDEBERT II
(A 575; B 592–595)
Faileuba

THEUDEBERT II (A 595–612) Bilichildis Theudechild			THEUDERIC II (B 595; A 612–613) Ermenberga

MEROVICH	CLOTHAR	SIGIBERT II (A 613)	CHILDEBERT	CORBUS	MEROVICH

SIGIBERT III
(A 634–656)

CHILDEBERTUS ADOPTIVUS (son of Grimoald 656–661?)	DAGOBERT II (656; 676–679)	CHLOTHAR III (N, B 657–673)	CHILDERIC II (A 662–675) Bilichildis

CLOVIS III
(A 675–676)

CHILPERIC II
(DANIEL)
(715–721)

A = King of Austrasia
B = King of Burgundy
N = King of Neustria
----- Uncertain

```
CHILPERIC I          GUNDOVALD
(N 561–584)          (pretender)
Audovera
Galswintha
Fredegund


MEROVICH        CHLOTHAR II
Brunechildis    (N 584; B, A 613–629)


                DAGOBERT I                      CHARIBERT II
                (A 623, N, B 629–638)           (Aquitaine 629/30–632)
                Gomatrudis
                Nantechildis
                Regnetrudis
                Vulfegundis
                Berchildis                      CHILPERIC


                CLOVIS II
                (N, B 638–657)
                Baldechildis


                        THEUDERIC III
                        (N, B 673, A 687–690/1)
                        Chrodechildis


CLOVIS IV               CHILDEBERT III          CHLOTHAR IV
(N, B, A 690/1–694/5)   (N, B, A 694/5–711)     (ca 717–719/20)

                        DAGOBERT III
                        (N, B, A 711–715)

                        THEUDERIC IV
                        (N, B, A 721–737)


            CHILDERIC III
            (N, B, A 743–751)


        THEUDERIC
```

APPENDIX B

A Note on Names

The bewildering variety of spellings encountered for early medieval names results from contemporary scribal variations, from internal transformations of early medieval languages between the fifth and ninth centuries, and from the tendency of modern scholars to reproduce medieval names according to modern equivalents. The result can be bewildering for students, since, for example, the name of the victor at Soissons appears at various times as Chlodovic, Chlodovicus, Chlodowech, and Clovis, all of which are equivalent to the modern Ludwig, Luigi, Louis, and Lewis, while the great Ostrogothic king's name which passed into the Merovingian family can be found as Theodoricus, Theuderic, Thodoric, Theoderic, and Thierry. Gunthchramn became in time Guntram, Sigibert also appears as Sigebert, and Brunechildis is transformed into Brunichild, Brunehaut, and Brunhilda. Rather than projecting back onto the period modern name forms (which subtly transform their bearers into French or Germans), I have attempted to use one consistent, contemporary spelling for each of the names with the exception of Chlodovic, who is so well known today as Clovis.

Notes

Preface

1. Florus of Lyons, *Opuscula adversus Amalarium*, PL 119.82a.

Chapter I

1. P. C. J. A. Boeles, *Friesland tot de elfde eeuw* (S'Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1951), 130, plate 16.

2. Eugippius, *Vita Severini* 21, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (hereafter MGH) *Auctores Antiquissimi* (hereafter AA) vol. I posterior, p. 19.

3. Walter Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans A.D. 418–584: The Techniques of Accommodation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1980).

4. Walter Goffart, *Caput and Colonate: Towards a History of Late Roman Taxation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 1974).

5. *Vita patrum Iurensium Romani, Lupicini, Eugendi*, II, 10, MGH *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* (hereafter SSRM) 3 p. 149.

6. Martin Heinzelmann, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien: Zur Kontinuität römischer Führungsschichten vom 4. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert. Soziale, prosopographische und bildungsgeschichtliche Aspekte, Beihefte der Francia* 5 (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1976).

7. Raymond Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 51–56.

Chapter II

1. *Germania*, 46. tr. H. Mattingly, (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Books, 1948), 140.

2. Here and elsewhere in this chapter the author draws on Bruno Krüger, ed. *Die Germanen: Geschichte und Kultur der germanischen*

Stämme im Mitteleurope. Bd. I *Von den Anfängen bis zum 2. Jahrhundert unserer Zeitrechnung* 2. berichtigte Auflage (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1978).

3. Plinius Maior, *Naturalis historia,* ed. C. Mayhoff (Leipzig: Teubner, 1892), 18, 44.

4. Julius Caesar, *Bellicum Gallicum,* ed. Otto Seel (Leipzig: Teubner, 1961), 6, 22.

5. Böhme, Horst Wolfgang, *Germanische Grabefunde des 4. bis 5. Jahrhunderts zwischen unterer Elbe und Loire: Studien zur Chronologie und Bevölkerungsgeschichte* 2 vols. *Münchner Beiträge zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte,* Bd. 19 (Munich: C.C.H. Beck'sche Verlags Buchhandlung: 1974).

6. The following depends largely on Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley: University of California Press, in press).

7. Hans Zeiss, "Fürstengrab und Reihengräbersitte," *Forschungen und Fortschritte 12* (1936, 302–303, reprinted in Franz Petri, ed. *Siedlung, Sprache, und Bevölkerungsstruktur im Frankenreich, Wege der Forschung* 49 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973), 282.

Chapter III

1. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum* (hereafter HF 2, 9. Throughout the author has frequently used or adapted the translation by Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth, U. K.: Penguin Classics, 1974).

2. *Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii scholastici Liber III,* 2. *MGH SSRM* 2, 93.

3. Cited in Joachim Werner, "Zur Entstehung der Reihengräberzivilisation: Ein Beitrag zur Methode der frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie," *Archaeologia Geographica 1* 1950, 23–32. Reprinted in Petri, *Siedlung, Sprache und Bevölkerungsstruktur,* p. 294.

4. *MGH Epistolae* 3, 113.

5. Ian Wood, "Gregory of Tours and Clovis," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 63 (1985), 249–272; Friedrich Prinz, *Grundlagen und Anfänge: Deutschland bis 1056. Neue Deutsche Geschichte,* ed. Peter Moraw, Volker Press, Wolfgang Schieder, vol. 1. (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1985), pp. 63–64.

6. HF 2, 37.

7. HF 2, 37.

8. HF 2, 42.

9. *Lex Salica* Prologue 2, *MGH Legum Sectio* I, IV, 2, p. 4.

10. *Lex Salica* 82, 2, p. 142. I am grateful to Professor Poly for allow-

ing me to consult his study of the Salic Law, which is to appear shortly.

11. The author follows here Ian Wood, "Kings, Kingdoms and Consent," in *Early Medieval Kingship*, P. H. Sawyer and Ian Wood, eds. (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1977), 6–29.

12. *Concilium Epaonense anno 517*, canon 8, *MGH Concilia* I, 21.

13. HF 3, 34.

14. HF 10, 26.

15. René Joffroy, *Le cimetière de Lavoye: Nécropole mérovingienne* (Paris: Éditions A. & J. Picard, 1974).

16. Jean Chapelot and Robert Fossier, *The Village and House in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 54–55.

17. H. Ament, *Fränkische Adelsgräber von Flonheim in Rheinhessen*, *Germanische Denkmäler der Völkerwanderungszeit* 5 (Berlin: 1970), 157.

18. Heike Grahn-Hoek, *Die fränkische Oberschicht im 6. Jahrhundert: Studien zu ihrer rechtlichen und politischen Stellung*, *Vorträge und Forschungen Sonderband* 21 (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1976).

19. Franz Irsigler, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des frühfränkischen Adels. Rheinisches Archiv, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für geschichtliche Landeskunde der Rheinlande an der Universität Bonn* no. 70 (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid Verlag, 1969).

20. Karl Bosl, "Freiheit und Unfreiheit: Zur Entwicklung der Unterschichten in Deutschland und Frankreich während des Mittelalters," *Vierteljahresschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 44 (1957), 193–219, reprinted *Frühformen der Gesellschaft im mittelalterlichen Europa* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1964), 180–203.

Chapter IV

1. HF 4, 28.

2. HF 6, 46.

3. Martin Heinzelmann, "L'aristocratie et les évéchés entre Loire et Rhin jusqu'à la fin du VIIe siècle," *Revue d'histoire de l'église de France* 62 (1975), 75–90.

4. Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina* 4–10, *MGH AA* 4/1.

5. HF 5, 5.

6. HF 6, 15.

7. HF 4, 6.

8. Gregory of Tours, *Liber vitae Patrum* (hereafter L.V.P.) 7 *MGH SSRM* 1, 686–690.

9. HF 6, 7.

10. HF 2, 17.

11. HF 2, 22.

12. HF 4, 36.

13. HF 5, 48.

14. HF 6, 11.

15. HF 5, 36.

16. HF 6, 36.

17. HF 5, 42.

18. HF 4, 36.

19. HF 8, 20.

20. HF 8, 22.

21. *Concilium Aurelianense, anno 533,* canon 20, and *Concilium Aurelianense, anno 541,* canon 15 *MGH Concilia* 1, 64 and 90.

22. Especially "Relics and Social Status in the Age of Gregory of Tours," in Peter Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 222–250.

23. HF 8, 15.

24. HF 4, 34.

25. L.V.P. 10, 705–709.

26. Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 153–158.

27. *Capitula tractanda cum comitibus episcopis et abbatibus,* 12, *MGH Capitularia* 1, 162.

28. Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium* 2, 3, ed. R. S. Moxon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 10.

29. *Concilium Aurelianense,* 19, *MGH concilium* 1, 7.

30. HF 9, 39.

31. *Liber in Gloria Confessorum,* 85, *MGH SSRM* 1, 802–803.

Chapter V

1. *Fredegarii Chronicorum Liber Quartus cum Continuationibus* (hereafter CF), J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, ed. and tr. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1960), 35.

2. *Childeberti secundi decretio, MGH Capitularia* 1, 15–23.

3. CF, 48.

4. CF, 74.

5. *Vita Desiderii Cadurcae urbis episcopi, MGH SSRM* 4, 569.

6. *Vita Desiderii,* 571–572.

7. CF, 50.

8. *Vitae Eligii episcopi Noviomagensis liber* II, 20, *MGH SSRM* 4, 712.

9. J. Guerout, "Le testament de Sainte Fare: matériaux pour l'étude et l'édition critique de ce document," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 60 (1965), 761–821.

10. Bailey K. Young, "Exemple aristocratique et mode funéraire dans la Gaule mérovingienne," *Annales ESC* 41 (1986), 396–401.

11. *Vita Audoini episcopi Rotomagensis, MGH SSRM* 5, 555.

12. Stéphane Lebecq, "Dans l'Europe du nord des VIIe–IXe siècles: Commerce frison ou commerce franco-frison?" *Annales ESC* 41 (1986), 361–377.

Chapter VI

1. *Gesta Dagoberti I. regis Francorum, MGH SSRM* 2, 408.

2. CF, 49.

3. *Virtutes Fursei abbatis Latiniacensis, MGH SSRM* 4, 444.

4. CF, 78–79; J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-haired Kings and Other Studies in Frankish History* (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1962), 142–143.

5. *Vita Sanctae Balthildis, MGH SSRM* 2, 493–494.

6. *Liber Historiae Francorum* 43, *MGH SSRM* 2, 316.

7. Paul J. Fouracre, "Observations on the Outgrowth of Pippinid Influence in the 'Regnum Francorum' after the Battle of Tertry (687–715)," *Medieval Prosopography* 5 (1984), 1–31.

8. *Erchanberti Brevarium, MGH Scriptores* (hereafter SS), 2, 328.

9. *Miracula Martialis*, 3 *MGH SS* 15, 280.

10. *Ex Gestis episcoporum Autisiodorensium, MGH SS* 13, 394.

11. *Vita Vulframni, MGH SSRM* 5, 668.

12. *Concilium in Austrasia habitum q.d. Germanicum, 742, MGH Legum* III, II, pars prior, 3.

13. CF, 96.

14. "Testamentum," ed. by Patrick J. Geary in his *Aristocracy in Provence: The Rhône Basin at the Dawn of the Carolingian Age* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 40–41.

15. *Annales regni Francorum, 749, ed. F. Kurze, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* (Hannover: 1895).

Chapter VII

1. Book 6, Chapter 62.

2. No. 56 (September 1981).

3. *Vita Karoli,* 1. tr. Lewis Thorpe, Einhard and Notker the Stam-

merer, *Two Lives of Charlemagne* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 55.

4. CF, 81.

5. CF, 86.

6. CF, 18.

7. Edward Peters, *The Shadow King: 'Rex Inutilis' in Medieval Law and Literature 751–1327* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

8. Jean-Edel Berthier, *1000 Chants* 2 (Paris: Les Presses d'Ile-de-France, 1975), 50.

9. Fortunatus, *Vita Remedii, MGH AA* 4, 12–23.

10. *Leadership and Community*, 171.

11. Einhard, *Translatio et miracula SS Marcellini et Petri*, 3, 5 *MGH SS* 15, 249–250.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Until quite recently, virtually all of the fundamental work on Merovingian history has been done in German and French and little has been translated. The following recommendations are intended as a first introduction for an English-reading audience; however the essential works of continental scholarship are included as well.

1. Sources

The standard commentary on the sources of Merovingian history is Wattenbach-Levison, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter: Vorzeit und Karolinger*, 5 parts (Weimar: Herman Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1952–73). Only the narrative sources have been translated: Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, L. Thorpe, tr. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974); *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations*, J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, ed. and tr. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1960); and *Liber Historiae Francorum*, Bernard S. Bachrach, tr. (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1973). Lives of Martin of Tours and Germanus of Auxerre and Honoratus of Arles are translated in F. R. Hoare, ed. and tr., *The Western Fathers* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954). Additional texts are found in Edward Peters, ed., *Monks, Bishops and Pagans: Christian Culture in Gaul and Italy, 500–700* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975) and in J. N. Hillgarth, ed., *Christianity and Paganism, 350–750: The Conversion of Western Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986). Jo Ann McNamara, John E. Halborg, and Gordon Whatleg have translated the lives of all of the Merovingian female saints in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, forthcoming.

2. General

Four general surveys of the entire Frankish period have recently appeared, with useful sections on the Merovingian centuries: Edward James, *The Origins of France: From Clovis to the Capetians, 500–1000* (London: Macmillan Press, 1982) (with a very useful bibliography); Friedrich Prinz, *Grundlagen und Anfänge: Deutschland bis 1056, Neue deutsche Geschichte,* Peter Moraw, Volker Press, Wolfgang Schieder, ed., vol. 1 (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1985); Karl Ferdinand Werner, *Histoire de France,* vol. 1. *Les origines (Avant l'an mil),* (Paris: Fayard, 1984); and Patrick Périn and Laure-Charlotte Feffer, *Les Francs:* vol. 1., *A la conquête de la Gaule,* and vol. 2, *A l'origine de la France* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1987). An essential survey with bibliography is found in Gebhardt, ed. *Handbuch der Deutschen Geschichte,* vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1970).

CHAPTER I

The most abundant literature in English concerns the late Roman period. The standard work, Arnold Hugh Martin Jones, *The Later Roman Empire,* 3 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), is now available in paperback from Johns Hopkins University Press. Other important works include Peter Brown's *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); his *The World of Late Antiquity A.D. 150–750* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971); his *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); his *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); and Ramsay MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1963). The standard study of Gallo-Roman aristocratic families remains Karl Friedrich Stroheker, *Der senatorische Adel im spätantiken Gallien* (Reutlingen: Alma Mater Verlag, 1948). An impressive recent study of Gaul is Raymond Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). The continuity of Roman political ideology East and West is traced in Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

CHAPTER II

The most important work in English on the barbarians is that of E. A. Thompson, especially *Romans and Barbarians: The Decline of the*

Western Empire (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982). Still
useful is J. M. Wallace-Hadrill's summary, *The Barbarian West: The
Early Middle Ages A.D. 400–1000* (London: Hutchinson and Company,
Ltd., 1962). Also important are Walter Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans
A.D. 418–584: The Techniques of Accommodation* (Princeton: Prince-
ton University Press, 1980); Lucien Musset, *The Germanic Invasions*
(Pittsburg: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975); and Alexan-
der C. Murray, *Germanic Kinship Structure. Studies in Law and Society
in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute
of Mediaeval Studies, 1983). The fundamental study from a method-
ological perspective is Reinhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Ver-
fassung: Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes* (Vienna–Cologne:
Böhlau, 1977). On the Goths, Herwig Wolfram's *History of the Goths*
(Berkeley: University of California Press, in press) is extremely valuable
both substantively and methodologically, as is his "The Shaping of the
Early Medieval Principality as a Type of Non-Royal Rulership," *Viator*
2 (1971), 33–51. On the later Ostrogoths, see Thomas Burns, *The
Ostrogoths* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) The archeo-
logical evidence is summarized in Bruno Krüger, ed., *Die Germanen:
Geschichte und Kultur der germanischen Stämme in Mitteleuropa. Bd.
1. Von den Anfängen bis zum 2. Jahrhundert unserer Zeitrechnung,* 2nd
edition (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1978). Additional essential works are
Joachim Werner's "Zur Entstehung der Reihengräberzivilisation" in
Franz Petri, ed., *Siedlung, Sprache und Bevölkerungsstruktur im Frank-
enreich. Wege der Forschung,* vol. 49 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche
Buchgesellschaft, 1973), 285–325; and Horst Wolfgang Böhme, *Ger-
manische Grabfunde des 4. bis 5. Jahrhunderts zwischen unterer Elbe
und Loire: Studien zur Chronologie und Bevölkerungsgeschichte,* 2
vols., Münchner Beiträge zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte Bd. 19 (Munich:
C.H. Beck'sche Verlags Buchhandlung, 1974); and his "Archäologische
Zeugnisse zur Geschichte der Markomannenkriege (166–180 N. CHR),"
Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums 22 (1975), 153–
217. On the peoples of the Danubian region, see most recently
Herwig Wolfram and Falko Daim, *Die Völker an der mittleren und
unteren Donau im fünften und sechsten Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Verlag
der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1980).

<div align="center">**CHAPTER III**</div>

The fundamental study of the early Franks is Erich Zöllner *Geschichte
der Franken Bis zur Mitte des 6. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: C. H. Beck
Verlag, 1970). The work of Eugen Ewig is basic for all Merovingian

history and much of it has been collected in *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien. Gesammelte Schriften (1952–1973)* Beihefte der *Francia* 3, ed. Hartmut Atsma. 2 vols. (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1976–1979). Also important are the essays by J. M. Wallace-Hadrill in *The Long-Haired Kings and Other Studies in Frankish History* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1962). On Merovingian archaeology see in particular Patrick Périn, *La datation des tombes mérovingiennes: Historique— Méthodes—Applications* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1980). In recent years, a number of younger British historians, trained largely by Wallace-Hadrill, have begun to make important contributions to Merovingian history. Among the collections in which their work appears are: Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre, *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), P. H. Sawyer and I. N. Wood, *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds: University of Leeds Press, 1977); and Patrick Wormald, Donald Bullough, and Roger Collins, eds., *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

On the household and society see David Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985) and Suzanne Fonay Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500–900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981). On Merovingian economy see Renée Doehaerd, *The Early Middle Ages in the West: Economy and Society* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1978); Robert Latouche, *The Birth of Western Economy: Economic aspects of the Dark Ages* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1961); Georges Duby, *The Early Growth of the European Economy: Warriors and Peasants from the Seventh to the Twelfth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

CHAPTER IV

On the political and institutional history of the sixth century see Herwig Wolfram, *Intitulatio I, Lateinische Königs-und Fürstentitel bis zum Ende des 8. Jahrhunderts, Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* Ergänzungsband 21 (Vienna: Hermann Böhlaus Nachf., 1967); E. Ewig, "Die fränkischen Teilungen und Teilreiche (511–613) in *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien,* 114–170; and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-haired Kings,* 148–206. Useful are Bernard Bachrach, *Merovingian Military Organization 481–751* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972); and Archibald R. Lewis, "The Dukes in the "Regnum Francorum" A.D. 550–751," *Speculum* 51

(1976), 381–410. On Frankish-Byzantine relations see Walter Goffart, "Byzantine Policy in the West under Tiberius II and Maurice: The Pretenders Hermenegild and Gundovald (579–585)," *Traditio* 13 (1957), 73–118.

J. M. Wallace-Hadrill's *The Frankish Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) contains important chapters on the church. A very useful introduction in English is the translation of volume two of the *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte,* which contains essays on the early medieval church by Eugen Ewig and others in Hubert Jedin and John Dolan, eds., *Handbook of Church History,* vol. 2, *The Imperial Church from Constantine to the Early Middle Ages* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1980.) On the episcopate see Martin Heinzelmann, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien: Zur Kontinuität römischer Führungsschichten vom 4. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert. Soziale, prosopographische und bildungsgeschichtliche Aspekte,* Beihefte der *Francia* 5 (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1976); and Georg Scheibelreiter, *Der Bishof in merowingischer Zeit, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* vol. 27 (Vienna: Hermann Böhlaus Nachf., 1983). On Martin of Tours see Clare Stancliffe, *St. Martin and His Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983). The classic study of Merovingian monasticism remains Friedrich Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich* (Munich: 1965), a new and revised version of which is in press. Prinz has also edited a collection of essential articles on monasticism and society: *Mönchtum und Gesellschaft im Frühmittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976). The major examination of Merovingian hagiography and society is František Graus, *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger im Reich der Merowinger: Studien zur Hagiographie der Merowingerzeit* (Prague: Nakladatelství Československé akademie věd, 1965).

CHAPTER V

On the dynastic history of the later sixth and early seventh centuries see Ewig, "Die Frankischen Teilreiche im 7. Jahrhundert (613–714)," in *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien,* 172–201; and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings,* 206–231. The standard reference for Merovingian secular officials is Horst Ebling, *Prosopographie der Amtsträger des Merowingerreiches von Chlothar II (613) bis Karl Martell (741),* Beihefte der *Francia* 2 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1974). Concerning estates and estate management see above all John Percival, "Seigneurial aspects of Late Roman Estate Management," *The English Historical Review* 332 (1969), 449–473; Walter Goffart's "From

Roman Taxation to Mediaeval Seigneurie: Three Notes," *Speculum* 47 (1972), 165–187 and 373–394; his "Old and New in Merovingian Taxation," *Past and Present* 96 (1982), 3–21; and Adriaan Verhulst, "La genèse du régime domanial classique en France au haute moyen âge," *Agricoltura e mondo rurale in occidente nell'alto medioevo, Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* 13 (Spoleto: 1966), 135–160.

On Columbanus and Frankish monasticism see the essays in H. B. Clarke and M. Brennan, eds., *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism,* British Archeological Reports s-113. (Oxford: 1981); as well as the fundamental works by Prinz in *Frühes Mönchtum* and in "Heiligenkult und Adelsherrschaft im Spiegel merowingischer Hagiographie," *Historisches Zeitschrift* 204 (1967), 529–544; R. Sprandel, *Der merowingische Adel und die Gebiete östlich des Rheines* (Freiburg: 1957); and Sprandel's "Struktur und Geschichte des merowingischen Adels," *Historische Zeitschrift* 193 (1961), 33–71. On the development of aristocratic and clerical culture see Pierre Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West, Sixth through Eighth Centuries* (Columbia, S.C.: South Carolina University Press, 1976); and M. L. W. Laistner, *Thought and Letters in Western Europe A.D. 500–900* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957); as well as Franz Irsigler, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des frühfränkischen Adels. Rheinisches Archiv, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für geschtliche Landeskunde der Rheinlande an der Universität Bonn* no. 70 (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid Verlag, 1969), a portion of which has been translated in Timothy Reuter, ed. and tr., *The Medieval Nobility: Studies on the ruling classes of France and Germany from the sixth to the twelfth century* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1978), as "On the aristocratic character of early Frankish society," 106–136. On missionary activity see Karl Ferdinand Werner, "Le rôle de l'aristocratie dans la christianisation du nord-est de la Gaule," *Revue de l'historie de l'église de France* 62 (1976), 45–73; C. E. Stancliffe, "From Town to Country: The Christianisation of the Touraine, 370–600," *Studies in Church History* 16 (1979), 43–59; Ian N. Wood, "Early Merovingian Devotion in Town and Country," ibid., 61–76; and Paul Fouracre, "The work of Audoenus of Rouen and Eligius of Noyon in Extending Episcopal Influence from the Town to the Country in Seventh-Century Neustria," ibid., 77–91.

CHAPTER VI

On the regions of Francia in the later seventh and eighth centuries see, in addition to the essays by Ewig noted above, his "Volkstum und

Volksbewusstsein im Frankenreich des 7. Jahrhunderts," *Spätantikes und Fränkisches Gallien* 1, 231–273 (although the author differs with some of his conclusions); Erich Zöllner, *Die politische Stellung der Völker im Frankenreich* (Vienna: Hermann Böhlaus Nachf., 1950); and Karl Ferdinand Werner, "Les principautés périphériques dans le monde Franc du VIIIe siècle," *I problemi dell'Occidente nel secolo VIII, Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* 20 (Spoleto: 1973), 483–532. On specific areas see Edward James, *The Merovingian Archaeology of South-West Gaul,* 2 vols. British Archaeological Reports Supplementary Series 25(i) (Oxford: 1977); Michel Rouche, *L'Aquitaine des Wisigoths aux Arabes 418–781: naissance d'une région* (Paris: Éditions Jean Touzot, 1979); Patrick J. Geary, *Aristocracy in Provence: The Rhône Basin at the Dawn of the Carolingian Age* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985); A. Joris, "On the Edge of Two Worlds in the Heart of the New Empire: The Romance Regions of Northern Gaul during the Merovingian Period," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 3 (1966), 3–52; Matthias Werner, *Der Lütticher Raum in frühkarolingischer Zeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980); Herwig Wolfram, "Der heilige Rupert und die antikarolingische Adelsopposition," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 80 (1972), 4–34; Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Die Karolinger und die Stadt des heiligen Arnulf," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 1 (1967), 250–364; and Herwig Wolfram, *Die Geburt Mitteleuropas: Geschichte Österreichs vor seiner Entstehung 378–907* (Vienna: Kremayr & Scheriau, 1987).

On Merovingian queens see Janet L. Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels: The Careers of Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History," *Medieval Women,* Derek Baker, ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 31–77. And most recently Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (London: Batsford Academic and Educational Ltd., 1983). On the confusing history of Griomoald and Childebert see Eugen Ewig, "Noch einmal zum 'Staatsstreich' Grimoald, *Spätantikes und Fränkisches Gallien* 1, 573–577; and Heinz Thomas, "Die Namenliste des Diptychon Barberini und der Sturz des Hausmeiers Grimoald," *Deutsches Archiv* 25 (1969), 17–63. On the rise of the Carolingians see Paul J. Fouracre, "Observations on the Outgrowth of Pippinid Influence in the 'Regnum Francorum' after the Battle of Tertry (687–715)," *Medieval Prosopography* 5 (1984), 1–31; and Josef Semmler, "Zur pippinidisch-karolingischen Sukzessionskrise 714–723," *Deutsches Archiv* 33 (1977), 1–36. On the Anglo-Saxon missionaries on the Continent the fundamental work remains Wilhelm

Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946). On the papacy of the eighth century see Thomas F. X. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680–825* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984). On Charles Martel and the early Carolingians see, in addition to Semmler, Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians 751–987* (London: Longman, 1983). The literature on the coronation of Pippin is vast. Most recently in English is Michael J. Enright, *Iona, Tara and Soissons: The Origin of the Royal Anointing Ritual, Arbeiten zur Frühmittelalterforschung* 17 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985).

CHAPTER VII

Edward Peter's *The Shadow King: Rex Inutilis in Medieval Law and Literature 751–1327* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970) remains the essential examination of the formation of the traditional attitude toward the Merovingians. On Einhard's image of the Merovingians see Adolf Grauert, "Noch einmal Einhard und die letzten Merowinger," in Lutz Frenske et al., *Institutionen, Kultur und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Josef Fleckenstein zu seinem 65. Geburtstag* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1984), 59–72. Karl Ferdinand Werner has worked for years to reform attitudes in France and Germany concerning Frankish history. See in particular the first essay in his *Vom Frankenreich zur Entfaltung Deutschlands und Frankreichs: Ursprünge— Strukturen—Beziehungen. Ausgewählte Beiträge* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1984), "En guise d'introduction: Conquête franque de la Gaule ou changement de régime?" 1–11.

Index

* This index includes only the principal persons and places figuring in the text.

BEFORE FRANCE AND GERMANY

"This is a fine and important book. Geary really does know the literature in all the relevant languages. He is not merely a gifted synthesizer; he is one of *the* research scholars in the field. I would adopt it; I have been waiting for such a survey."

<div align="right">

Edward Peters
University of Pennsylvania

</div>

"Offers a synthesis of the period of great originality and explanatory power.... It goes without saying that this book will become a part of my syllabi, for both graduate and undergraduate courses. It was a great pleasure to read it...and it will be a great pleasure to teach it in the years to come."

<div align="right">

Barbara H. Rosenwein
Loyola University of Chicago

</div>

In this innovative new study, Patrick J. Geary looks beyond traditional notions of European history to present the Merovingian period (ca. 400-750) as an integral part of late antiquity. Drawing on the latest scholarship in archaeology, cultural history, historical ethnography, and other fields, he develops an original interpretation of both Merovingian history and the Romano-barbarian world from which it arose. Deftly mapping the complex interactions of a volatile era, Geary traces the Romanization of barbarians and the barbarization of Romans that ultimately made these populations indistinguishable. Concise, authoritative, and elegantly written, *Before France and Germany* is an important contribution to our understanding of a crucial but often neglected period of Western history.

About the Author
Patrick J. Geary is Director of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is the author of *Furta Sacra* (1978) and *Aristocracy in Provence* (1985).

Photo courtesy of Bibl. Nat., Paris
Tremessis of Dagobert I, struck by Eligius,
the future St. Eloi