

DOCUMENT A

The Impact of Charlemagne on the Institutions of the Frankish Realm

Author(s): François L. Ganshof

Source: *Speculum*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Jan., 1965), pp. 47-62

Published by: Medieval Academy of America

While the decisive influence of Charlemagne on the institutions of the Frankish monarchy is well known, what is more obscure and what is here to be discussed in detail is the manner in which Charlemagne wielded this influence.

This was done chiefly through the capitularies which were decrees divided into articles (*capitulum*) by which the Carolingian monarchs issued legislative and administrative provisions. (47)

Among other things one finds here [in the capitulum], supported by biblical quotations, the fundamental rule of the Carolingian method of government: there must be peace and concord, that is to say, trusting collaboration between the ecclesiastical authorities and the secular agents of royal power. In different forms, this rule was very often repeated later and, though in theory it remained a leading principle for the functioning of institutions, in practice it was not always effective. (48)

From the group of institutions strongly influenced by Charlemagne – central institutions of the realm, regional administrative institutions, judicial institutions, manorial institutions, military institutions, vassalage, coinage, weights, and measures – I have chosen the judicial institutions to illustrate what has been described. Their object was to secure for each individual the possibility of having his rights recognized, established, and protected, and to ensure the respect for law, a prevailing concern of Charlemagne.

Within the judicial institutions I shall limit my discussion to the organization, leaving out the substance of the law, the system of evidence, and the course of procedure once the law suit was begun. Even within judicial organization I shall not go beyond the ordinary court, that is the county court or *mallus*, and only occasionally shall I refer to the judicial assizes of the *missi dominici* or to the Palace court.

Arbitrary actions liable to affect people's lives or their possessions were prohibited. To hang a man, even when he seemingly was caught in the act, was forbidden on pain of severe penalty even if it concerned a serf; regular judicial procedure had to be applied even if it be the summary procedure of "flagrante delicto". The Frankish judicial procedure concerning goods apparently belonging to no one was introduced in Bavarian law to forbid in Bavaria the appropriation of goods that might have been lost by some one or stolen from him. The emperor's concern for equity stretched out to those who had been condemned to death but to whom mercy had been granted; their person and their goods legally acquired after the granting of pardon had the benefit of protection by the law courts. (52)

## DOCUMENT B

Adémar de Chabannes, Carolingian Musical Practices, and "Nota Romana"

Author(s): James Grier

Source: *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Spring, 2003), pp. 43-98

Published by: University of California Press on behalf of the American Musicological Society

The evidence presented here shows that Frankish singers had difficulty negotiating the performing nuances of the Roman singing style. . . . These obstacles forced Charlemagne to issue legislation that would require the Franks to adopt not only the Roman liturgical repertory but also the Roman style of performance. The combination of these circumstances motivated the Frankish (43) singers to develop a musical notation that would aid them in remembering the style of execution required for the desired mode of delivery. (44)

These conclusions depend on two types of evidence. The first comes from a historical narrative written between 1025 and 1028 by Ademar de Chabannes (989-1034), . . . who unequivocally states that Frankish singers adopted musical notation in the late eighth century. The second arises from a . . . reassessment of the eighth- and ninth- century sources that describe or regulate Carolingian musical practices. These documents show striking similarities with Ademar's account and therefore confirm certain elements of it; they also evince an ongoing concern on the part of Carolingian officials, including the successive rulers Pepin the Short, Charlemagne, and Louis the Pious, with the style of singing employed in the new liturgy. Together, these two categories of evidence lead me to conclude that the invention of neumatic notation took place in Charlemagne's realm during the period 790-810, probably in the city of Metz; and that it arose in response to a policy formed by the central administration of the empire with the direct participation of Charlemagne regarding the standardization of not only the liturgical repertoires to be practiced throughout the empire but also the style of singing to be employed. (44)

## DOCUMENT C

Two Reforms of Charlemagne? Weights and Measures in the Middle Ages

Author(s): Harry A. Miskimin

Source: *The Economic History Review, New Series*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Apr., 1967), pp. 35-52

Published by: Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the Economic History Society

What were the metrological reforms introduced into Europe by Charlemagne? There is at present no consensus among historians regarding this, one of the two most lasting vestiges of the Carolingian empire. We know that the monetary account pound was fixed by Charlemagne at 20 shillings and 240 pence; we know that the pound weight was divided into 12 ounces; we know also that a pound weight was often measured in shillings so that 20 shillings equalled a pound weight and an ounce equalled 20 pence. (35)

## DOCUMENT D

### Carolingian Missionary Theories

Author(s): Richard E. Sullivan

Source: *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Oct., 1956), pp. 273-295

Published by: Catholic University of America Press

When Alcuin addressed his letters to Charlemagne's court in 796 to plead for a sensible missionary policy in connection with the Avars, he made no protest against the fact that Charlemagne's armies would force the Avars to accept baptism. He was interested in what happened after the Avars had been made submissive. A synod held on the Danube just prior to the campaign of 796 to lay plans for converting the Avars gave no attention to the question of persuading the Avars to become Christians. Its decisions were made on the assumption that Charlemagne's armies would create an audience for the missionaries.

Several Carolingian writers made it perfectly clear that they felt the most efficient way to bring pagans to the point where they would listen to Christian teaching was the use of political force, arguing openly that it was justifiable and praiseworthy to initiate the conversion process by the use of the sword. The author who wrote that Charlemagne "preached with the iron tongue" intended his statement as praise. (277)

## DOCUMENT E

### The Exhibition of Carolingian Art at Aachen

Author(s): Ruth Berenson

Source: *Art Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Winter, 1966-1967), pp. 160-165

Published by: College Art Association

One of the great art events of the summer of 1965, unfortunately little noted in this country, was the exhibition dedicated to Charlemagne, that earlier "Grand Charles" who, nearly 1200 years ago, first gave substance to a dream of a United Europe—a dream which, ever since, has continued to haunt the minds of men from the Atlantic to the Urals.

To show the varying strains which went to produce the Carolingian flowering, the exhibition began by sampling the chaotic centuries which preceded Charlemagne's triumph. (160)

The main focus of the exhibition was on the brief period between 771, the year Charlemagne took power, and 840 when his son, Louis the Pious, died and the empire fell apart. It was these years which, in art, witnessed the merger of the conflicting strains of the pre-Carolingian centuries into the monumental imperial style developed in the School of the Palace at Aachen. It seems likely that the impulse toward stylistic unity was inspired by Charlemagne's own passionate determination to fuse his far-flung possessions into a durable political entity. With no immediate forebears to learn from, he naturally adopted, as best he could, the means evolved over the centuries by his Roman predecessors, standardizing the coinage, taxes, weights and measures, eradicating local heresies and forcing the universal adoption of the Roman liturgy, reconciling conflicting illegalities in the laws of the various tribes under his control. In all this he, who was only barely literate, owed much to the Anglo-Saxon monk, Alcuin, his chief deputy, whose protean role under Charlemagne so curiously presages that played by André Malraux under today's Charles. It was doubtless Alcuin who pushed the adoption of the Roman liturgy

and who, a distinguished classical scholar, not only published a revision of the Bible which remained authoritative to the end of the Middle Ages but firmly established the use of Latin for all legal documents and correspondence-and saw to it that everything was written down in the beautifully legible script known to us as the Carolingian minuscule. It is this script, together with the many Latin texts known to us only through copies made in Carolingian scriptoria, which is the chief Carolingian legacy to our own time. (161-162)

At the moment of its brief flowering, Carolingian art, especially painting, displays a kind of over-all stylistic unity which tends to minimize local differences, just as the over-all political unity of the empire erased, or at least temporarily obscured, differences of nation and tribe. (162)

But the Aachen exhibition seemed to supply convincing evidence that what happened during those years was of seminal importance for the development of Western Art. Before Charlemagne, or at least before the middle of the 8th century (a convenient date is 751, the year Charlemagne's grandfather and immediate predecessor, Pepin, was crowned king of the Franks), the art of northern Europe and Ireland was pagan, barbaric, primitive – an ornamental art from which the human figure was either excluded or, when present, was dehumanized into a mask, a kind of totem or magical symbol as in the Echternach Gospels (end 7th century) and Merovingian manuscripts like those from Luxeuil. Around 750, the human image, truly human, makes its appearance. In the Stockholm Code Aureus painted in Canterbury around 750, the evangelists are seated in recognizable architectural settings, complete with curtains, in the manner of the consular dyptichs; the figures convey a sense of reality despite their flatness, lack of articulation, their hard outlines and schematic linear draperies. Nevertheless, compared to the products of the Palace School about fifty years later, they are weightless, unsubstantial, almost like paper cut-outs. There is none of the monumental dignity, the classical feeling for weight and support which we find in the Palace School evangelists. (164)

## DOCUMENT F

Integration and Social Reproduction in the Carolingian Empire

Author(s): John Moreland and Robert Van de Noort

Source: *World Archaeology*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Archaeology of Empires (Feb., 1992), pp. 320-334

Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.

The link between the Church and the Carolingians was to form one of the central pillars of the Carolingian Empire. We can trace the emergence of that connection through an examination of the interaction between 'paganism' and Christianity, as revealed in Merovingian cemetery archaeology. (322)

The eastern parts of the Empire - Saxony, Thuringia, Alamannia, etc. - had been only loosely controlled by the Merovingians, and by the eighth century had become largely independent (Nitz 1988: 250). They were, however, reconquered by the Carolingians in the late eighth century, and a detailed study of the archaeology and place-name evidence by Hans-Jurgen Nitz provides us with an insight into some of the mechanisms employed by the conquerors to ensure their continued incorporation. Nitz argues that the Carolingians employed three strategies for the integration of these areas:

- 1 The confiscation of estates and the introduction of Frankish and Slavic settlers.
- 2 Gifts of large areas to military and ecclesiastical elites.

### 3 The establishment of monasteries and churches. (325)

The Carolingian Renaissance was Court-produced and Court-directed. Drawing upon the intellectual resources of Italy, Spain, England and Ireland, the Carolingians assembled a body of clerical thinkers, and it was these people at Court, and in their monasteries and cathedral complexes, who dictated and determined Carolingian political philosophy, and who patronized and produced art and architecture. In both ideology and material culture, the two basic themes of the Renaissance - the rebirth of the Frankish nation as the people of God, and the rebirth of the Roman Empire - were to be used to deny rifts in the social system. (328)

## DOCUMENT G

### Charles the Bald (823-877) and His Library: The Patronage of Learning

Author(s): Rosamond McKitterick

Source: *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 95, No. 374 (Jan., 1980), pp. 28-47

Published by: Oxford University Press

In a faith so much inspired and directed by the written word as Christianity, the books which contained the word of God, the teachings of Christ and of the early fathers, were treasured as the source of all wisdom and authority. The written word was possessed of great power; as to the Anglo-Saxon, so to the Frank, 'words came as new riches to be valued no less than the gleaming gold and garnet of newly-fashioned jewels' (Blair 140). (29)

The Carolingian programme for reform and its continuance had, furthermore, lent to Carolingian scholarship a decidedly biblical and theological emphasis; it was a scholarship designed, ultimately, to serve God. Charles the Bald inherited his illustrious grandparent's conviction that the cultivation of intellectual and artistic endeavour and the development of the mind were not only highly desirable in themselves but also necessary for the strength of the Christian religion and for the success of Christian society within the Frankish lands. What was essential for this progress of learning was both the material support for scholars and a favourable attitude on the part of the ruler and his advisers. (29)

At the same time there were a number of monasteries such as Corbie, Tours, Rheims, Fulda and Lorsch which were emerging as important centres of both learning and book production. While the existence of a palace scriptorium at the court of Charles the Bald has not yet been proven, that Charles was more disposed to act as a patron to these other centres of learning and book production in his kingdom is reflected in the books he acquired. (29)

## DOCUMENT H

### Life in the Age of Charlemagne

Author(s): Munz, Peter

Published by: B.T. Batsford, Ltd., London, 1969.

In order to cement the bonds of society and to increase the feeling of association beyond the cold bonds which resulted from the community of interests of the upper classes, Charlemagne tried to promote a certain amount of basic education. He had a love of wisdom and leaning for their own sake. There was much more than mere flattery in the verses which hailed

Charlemagne not only as a zealous warrior but also as an indefatigable worker for the improvement of learning. His intentions, however, were always practical. He realized that the administrative system might be improved if a few people could be made to learn to read and write. He saw the necessity for elementary knowledge in arithmetic so that the moveable feasts could be determined with accuracy. He realized that the propagation of religious knowledge depended on a understanding of the Scriptures and on the clergy's ability to read the collections of homilies that were available.

He issued a great many instructions to bishops and abbots to establish schools near their cathedrals and in their monasteries. He criticized the illiteracy of the clergy and the uncouth language in which they expressed themselves. Some bishops and abbots followed his advice; many others probably neglected it. But, at his own Palace and in his own household, Charlemagne saw to it that instruction was provided. (116-117)

The most tangible expression of this conception of his power is his legislative enterprise. The mere volume of his legislation is unique in medieval history. The large number of his written laws and instructions which have come down to us comprise no less than 1,075 separate pieces of 'legislation'. They were collected and issued in bundles known as 'capitularies'. Each capitulary consisted of a series of admonitions, rules, regulations and orders concerning all things under the sun. They touched on private matters, on economics and trade, on religion and justice and warfare. Some are addressed to specific officials; others are couched in general tones. Nothing was too big or too small to escape the King's attention, and these capitularies, if noting else, bear witness to his constant vigilance. They were not formally enacted by a legislative body. They were issued on the King's authority as an expression of his concern and responsibility for the welfare of the people entrusted to him by God. Charlemagne was unique among medieval rulers in his scrupulous concern for the welfare of his subjects. (56-57)

Charlemagne realized that there was no point in displaying such legislative activity unless there existed at least a rudimentary administrative system. He could not be in all places in his vast dominions at the same time and therefore, he elaborated the custom practiced for three centuries by his predecessors of delegating royal authority to counts. These counts were supposed to be officials who represented the King in a circumscribed number of counties. It is estimated that, if the whole area of the kingdom had been covered with counties, there would have been between 250 and 300 counts at any one time – although the sources mention no more than 120 for the whole reign. In fact, the subdivision into counties was far from complete; and there were probably many magnates who called themselves counts without any distinct authority to do so. The counts were to hold courts of justice at regular intervals, levy an army when the King required one, and collect the contributions which were due to the Crown. They were supposed to visit the King once a year in order to keep in touch. (57-58)

Probably more spectacular at the time than the new plough was the gradual spread of the three-field system of crop rotation. Under the older, two-field system, half the land had been planted with winter grain and the other half had been left fallow. In the following year, the roles of the fields were reversed, so that in every year one-half of the arable land was fallow. In the three-field system, the available land was divided into thirds. One-third was planted in autumn with winter crops (wheat or rye); another was planted in spring with summer crops (oats, barley, lentils); and another was left fallow. In the following year, the first and third fields were planted with summer and winter crops respectively and the second was left fallow, and so on. This new system greatly reduced the land which was left fallow in any one year. This new rotation, with June as the month for ploughing the fallow, was much talked about and attracted great attention – so much so that, when Charlemagne introduced the new vernacular names for the months of

the year, June was described as the ploughing month, *Brachmanoth*, and in some ninth-century calendar pictures June is shown as the month in which men plough. Obviously, the ploughing of the fallow land in June was something new and spectacular, which overshadowed the significance of ordinary ploughing for crops at the customary times. (13-14)