

Beihefte der Francia

Bd. 37

1994

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716: A CRUCIAL YEAR FOR CHARLES MARTEL

The early years of Charles Martel's life are all but obscured from the historian's view. We know that he was the son of Pippin II and because his father was powerful and famous, we are reasonably well informed about Charles' paternal origins. The historian, however, has a far more clouded view of the maternal side of Martel's family. The important contemporary Neustrian chronicle, the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, assures that he was Pippin's son by a wife, that is to say not by a concubine¹, and the first Continuator of Fredegar, who wrote in 736 when Martel firmly controlled the political reins of all Francia, provides us with her name, Alpaïda². Since we gain little more direct information about the maternal side of Charles Martel's family from the reliable contemporary sources, we must proceed cautiously by inference and deduction in order to flesh out this meagre sketch. I have argued elsewhere that Martel's maternal family was that of Dodo, his uncle and Alpaïda's brother, a powerful *domesticus* from the area around Liège, and that it was the political strength provided by this family which equipped him for his important military victory over the Neustrians, a victory which came at Amblève in April of 716³. In this present paper I should like turn to another question concerning the early political career of Charles Martel: How and when was he able to expand his power base beyond that which he had at Amblève to the point where he could gain what turned out to be the deciding victory over the Neustrians at Vinchy on 21 March, 717 and then go on to snatch control of the Pippinid family away from his more powerful stepmother, Plectrud?

In the family succession struggle which followed the Death of Pippin II in 714, Plectrud seemed destined to maintain her firm control. She was rich in her own right and came from a powerful family with great landed wealth on the middle Moselle⁴.

1 »ex alia uxore« (*Liber Historiae Francorum*, ch. 49, ed. Bruno KRUSCH, Hannover 1888 [MGH SRM II], p. 324).

2 Pippinus aliam duxit uxorem nobilem et elegantem nomine Chalpaïda... (Fredegar Continuation, ch. 6, in: J. M. WALLACE-HADRILL, *The Fourth Book of Fredegar with its Continuations*, Westport, Connecticut reprint 1981, p. 86).

3 Richard A. GERBERDING, *The Rise of The Carolingians And The Liber Historiae Francorum*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, pp. 116–133.

4 The elucidation of the position of Plectrud's family was largely the work of Camille WAMPACH (Irmina von Ören und ihre Familie, in: *Trierer Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kunst des Trierer Landes und seiner Nachbargebiete* 3 [1928] pp. 144–154; and in the introduction to his *Geschichte der Grundherrschaft Echternach im Frühmittelalter I–1: Textband*, Luxembourg 1930, pp. 113–138. Hereafter, WAMPACH, Echternach, I–1). Wampach argues that Plectrud is the daughter of Irmina of Ören, the founder of Echternach. His arguments stem from a careful scrutiny of Echternach's and other

In her grandson, Theodoald, she had Pippin's designated successor as mayor of the palace⁵, she controlled the Pippinid family treasure⁶, and she was recognized as Austrasia's leader by the Neustrians and non-Frankish powers⁷. Martel, on the other hand, seemed to have all the cards stacked against him. He had been recently imprisoned by Plectrud⁸, he was not his father's designated successor as mayor, and in at least one important case, that of Sustern, north of Maastricht, he had been excluded from inheriting and controlling Pippinid lands⁹. How then was this decided underdog able to achieve victory not only over the far more powerful branch of Pippin's family but eventually over the rest of the Austrasians and over the forces who ruled Neustria as well?

Since at Pippin's death, Martel was excluded by his stepmother from control of the political resources of his paternal family, he drew his first supporters from his mother's side. Alpaïda belonged to the local nobility from the middle Meuse, in and around Liège. We have several indications that this was their native area. This was her brother's, Dodo's, sphere of activity¹⁰. Godobald, one of Dodo's followers, who along with him carried out the murder of Lambert, bishop of Liège, in 703, came from Avroy, near Liège in the Haspengau¹¹. A strong local tradition connects Alpaïda, herself, with Jupille¹² and Orp-le-Grand¹³, and it is in the Liégeois that we hear of Martel's first military activities¹⁴.

monasteries' donation charters and are based largely on the patterns of the family's landholdings. He lays aside the older idea that Irmina's family was connected to the Merovingian royal house. Both Theofrid, abbot of Echternach (1081–1110) and author of a *Vita Willibrordi*, and Theoderic, author of Echternach's cartulary, the *Liber Aureus Epternacensis* (1192), claimed that Irmina was the daughter of King Dagobert I. (Theofrid, *Vita sanctae Irminae*, included without special introductory notation by L. Weiland [ed.] in: *Chronicon Epternacense auctore Theoderico Monacho*, Hannover 1874 [MGH SS 23] pp. 48ff. For Theoderic, see no. 215 of the cartulary in: Camille WAMPACH, *Geschichte der Grundherrschaft Echternach im Frühmittelalter*, I–2: Quellenband, Luxembourg 1930, p. 368. [Hereafter, WAMPACH, Echternach, I–2] where; ...*ab Irmina, filia Dagoberti regis*... Wampach considers this royal connection to have been a legend which grew up near Ören in Trier in Theoderic's day in which a tenth-century charter for Ören forged in Dagobert I's name may have had a role. *Diplomata Spuria*, ed. G. H. PERTZ, Hannover 1872 [MGH Dipl. Imp. I] no. 52, pp. 169–170, where Irmina is called »*filia nostra*«). Eduard HLAWITSCHKA, (Zur landschaftlichen Herkunft der Karolinger, in: *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 27 [1962] pp. 6–14) builds on Wampach's work to give a fuller picture of Plectrud's holdings.

5 *Theudoaldum vero, iubente avo, in aula regis honorem patril sedem sublimen instituunt* LHF, ch. 50 (see note 1) p. 325).

6 *ibid.*, chs. 52 and 53.

7 *ibid.*, ch. 51.

8 *ibid.*, ch. 51.

9 *Diplomata Maiorum Domus e stirpe Arnulforum* ed. G. H. PERTZ, Hannover 1872 (MGH Dipl. Imp. I) no. 6, pp. 95–96, and WAMPACH, Echternach I–2, no. 24, pp. 57–60. See: FRANZ FELTEN, *Äbte und Laienäbte im Frankenreich*, Stuttgart 1980 (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 20), p. 129.

10 *Vita Landiberti Episcopi Traiectensis Vetustissima*, ch. 11, ed. B. KRUSCH, Hannover 1913 (MGH SRM VI) p. 365.

11 *Miracula S. Dionysii*, the first miracle of which is edited by KRUSCH in: *Neues Archiv* 18 (1893) p. 601f.

12 Sigebert of Gembloux, *Vita Landiberti*, ch. 18; Nicholas of Liège, *Vita Landiberti*, ch. 16, both ed. B. KRUSCH (see note 10); Theoderic Pauli's *Acta S. Suidberti*, Auctore Marcellino, ch. 25; and others.

13 Joseph DEWEZ, *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire d'Alpaïde, mère de Charles Martel*, in: *Nouveaux Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Sciences et Belles-lettres de Bruxelles* 3 (1826) pp. 337–339.

14 LHF (see note 1) ch. 52.

At the death of Pippin the locals in the Maastricht-Liège area were beset with a double danger. In the north, Radbod, duke of the Frisians, took the occasion to ally with the Neustrians and to win back that part of Frisian territory which Pippin had put under Frankish control in the 690s¹⁵. When Martel went out against the Frisians, he did so presumably with only a local force, since the *Liber Historiae Francorum* uses the phrase »his own companions« (»sodalibus suis«) to describe Martel's military losses and makes no mention of Plectrud. Martel suffered defeat¹⁶. The Neustrians too, under their mayor, Raganfred, and their newly established king, Chilperic, who was formerly a cleric called Daniel, crossed the Ardennes to the Rhine and Cologne, where they extracted a great amount of treasure from Plectrud. But as they were returning to Neustria, in March or April of 716¹⁷, passing near Liège, Martel fell upon them at Amblève¹⁸. This is the first known military success for the future ruler of all Francia.

It is my contention that the area around Maastricht and Liège had long been a difficult one for outsiders such as the Pippinids to control. Before the incursions of the 690s in the wake of Pippin's Frisian successes, neither his own nor Plectrud's family seemed to hold much, if any, land in the area¹⁹. There seemed also to be a great deal of resentment on the part of the locals against outsiders as evidenced by their long history of either evicting or murdering the bishops imposed upon them²⁰. Pippin's marriage to Alpaïda in the late 680s seems an obvious attempt to ally himself with the local powers of the area. It was Martel, issue of this union, who fell heir to the fortunes of Dodo's and Alpaïda's family and, after Pippin's death when Plectrud began to take steps to insure the succession of her heirs and to exclude Alpaïda's (she actually imprisoned Martel for a while)²¹, Dodo's family would have provided Martel with his most important support. But scarcely a year later, the disinherited heir, recently imprisoned by his stepmother, and defeated by the Frisians, rendered a combined force of Frisians and Neustrians a resounding defeat at Vinchy on 21 March, 717. Obviously his following had grown from that small but important force provided by the followers of his maternal family to one well able to compete successfully in the international arena. How was this possible in so short a time? I shall argue that Martel's fortunes were vastly augmented in the few short months of 716 and 717 between the battles of Amblève and Vinchy by the disaffection of the powerful in Plectrud's camp, not least of whom was Plectrud's

15 716: Annales Tiliani; Annales Sancti Amandi; and *mense martio*, Annales Petaviani, all ed. G. H. PERTZ, Hannover 1826 (MGH SS I) pp. 6–7. Annales Alamannici and Annales Nazariani, both in: Walter LENDI (ed.), *Die Murbacher Annalen mit Edition*, Freiburg/Switzerland 1971, pp. 148–149.

16 *Carlus quoque super ipsos Frigiones inruit, ibique maximum dispendium de sodalibus suis perpressus est, atque per fugam delapsus, abcessit* (LHF [see note 1] ch. 52).

17 The Annales S. Amandi date the Frisian incursion in March of 716 (see note 15, p. 6). The battle at Amblève would have happened shortly thereafter.

18 LHF (see note 1) ch. 52.

19 See GERBERDING (note 3) pp. 120–124.

20 In the early 650s, Bishop Amandus was driven out (*Vita Amandi* [see note 15] ch. 18); Bishop Theodard was murdered (*Vita Landiberti Vet.* [see note 10] ch. 4); in 675 Bishop Lambert was deposed (*ibid.*, ch. 5); in 682 Bishop Pharamund was driven from the diocese (*ibid.*, ch. 7); and although Lambert was reinstalled by Pippin, his second tenure ended in his murder in about 703 (*ibid.*, chh. 12–17).

21 LHF (see note 1) ch. 51.

own most important cleric and abbot of her monastery at Echternach: the Anglo-Saxon, Willibrord.

As with most learned clerics of his age, Willibrord came from the nobility. Alcuin and Beonrad (Abbot of Echternach, 776–797) belonged to the same family²². We are reasonably well informed about his career by several contemporary and near-contemporary sources. Bede, who died in 735, only five years earlier than Willibrord (739), mentions him in several places, Alcuin wrote a *vita* of him²³, and he figures prominently in the many surviving charters from the early days in the history of Echternach²⁴. It is especially these charters which will aid us as we try to discern the events of 716, the crucial year in the early career of Charles Martel.

Willibrord picked a significant year to begin his missionary activity among the Frisians. In November of 690 he left Ireland with eleven companions, landed at the mouth of the Rhine and preceeded to Utrecht²⁵. Pippin had recently (*nuper* says Bede) placed *citeriorem Fresiam* under Frankish control²⁶, most likely in the wake of his victory over the Neustrians at Tertry in 687. Utrecht, however, as Willibrord and his companions found, was still in the hands of the pagan Frisians and their leader, Radbod, and thus the Christians turned south into Frankish territory where they were cordially received by Pippin²⁷. The episode is instructive: Willibrord did not attempt missionary work where he did not have the support of the area's controlling political power.

After securing the assurance of Pippin's support and a short six or seven months after his arrival, Willibrord made his first trip to Rome in the summer of 691. Our information about the trip comes from Bede²⁸; curiously Alcuin, who was more concerned with matters Frankish and Roman than Bede, does not mention it. Very soon there occurred another revealing episode which throws light on just how deeply intertwined Willibrord had already become with Frankish politics. The new Frisian missionary group held its first episcopal election and chose, not Willibrord, but an older member of their number, Suidbert by name, as their first bishop, and sent him off to Wilfred, at that time in exile in Mercia, to be consecrated. Bede reports the election but offers no explanation for its unexpected outcome²⁹. Was there trouble in the ranks? Why did these missionaries working under Frankish

22 See WAMPACH, Echternach I–1, p. 10 (note 4) note 5.

23 Vita Willibrordi Archiepiscopi Traiectensis auctore Alcuino, ed. W. LEVISON, Hannover 1920 (MGH SRM VII) pp. 81–141.

24 Collected and edited by WAMPACH in Echternach I–2 (see note 4).

25 Alcuin, V. Willibrordi (see note 23) ch. 5. The date comes from a marginal note on the November page of Willibrord's calendar (facsimile in H. A. WILSON [ed.], The Calendar of Saint Willibrord, London 1918). The note is believed to be in Willibrord's own hand. Cf. Carolus PLUMMER (ed.), Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica (tomus posterior), Oxford 1896, p. 292.

26 Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica (HE) V, 10 (see note 25) p. 289 defines Hither Frisia as the southwestern portion. Levison (see note 23) p. 83, n. 7, following Albert HAUCK, Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands I, Leipzig 1922, p. 435, n. 5, says it probably meant the whole area south of the Rhine. Both he and WAMPACH (Echternach I–1 [see note 4] p. 30, n. 3), however, recommend caution in assuming we know the geographical limits of what Bede meant by the phrase.

27 ...divertentes ad Pippinum ducem Francorum, gratanter ab illo suscepti sunt... HE V, 10 (see note 25) p. 299.

28 ibid., V, 11.

29 ibid., V, 10.

political protection choose for their first bishop not the group's leader and Pippin's protégé, Willibrord, but an older cleric, Suidbert? And why did they sent him to be consecrated not to Pippinid Gaul but to England? Do these things indicate that perhaps even this early in Willibrord's continental career he was too closely tied to Pippinid politics for the tastes of his followers? The sources are silent, and although the questions have certainly occurred to scholars, learned opinion has largely refused to speculate³⁰.

Pippin continued to enjoy military success against the Frisians in the 690s, driving them further northward and thereby opening up more land for Frankish settlement³¹. In 695 Willibrord again went to Rome. This time Pippin sent him and requested Pope Sergius to consecrate him archbishop for the Frisians³². This was done and Pippin gave Willibrord Utrecht as his episcopal seat³³. Pippin's expansionist politics in Frisia were now well in hand. He was winning on the battlefield and he had caused a loyal follower to be established as archbishop in Utrecht. Many see Willibrord as pathbreaking in his methods. His subordination to Pippin in the Christianization of the Frisians was the first important instance of that alliance between a missionary Church and the Carolingians which was to have such momentous results for both in the future³⁴. In spiritual allegiance Willibrord was neither dependent upon the Gaulic Church nor upon the Anglo-Saxons, but rather worked under the direct auspices of Rome³⁵. He organized the converted areas into an ecclesiastical system of dioceses and parishes so that the conversions he had won would have the necessary institutional support to ensure their permanence³⁶. All these, although they appear to be aspects of Christian missionary work, have important political benefit for Pippin. In Willibrord and his methods, Pippin had a crucial means of securing newly conquered Frisia and making it dependent upon himself and his family³⁷. Success on the battlefield opened the land to Frankish control; conversion to Christianity gave the locals the God of the Franks and much of Frankish culture; but it was the position of Willibrord which bound the newly organized Frisian Church not to the Franks in general, but closely to the Pippinids in particular.

All was working well. By 711 Pippin had succeeded to the point where he concluded a treaty with Radbod, arranging the marriage of his son, Grimoald, to

30 Cf. WAMPACH, Echternach I-1 (see note 4) pp. 34-36; and LEVISON (see note 23) p. 84. See HAUCK (note 26) p. 407, note 2 for the older literature on the subject.

31 HE V, 11 (see note 25) LHF, ch. 49 (see note 1). We know from Bede that Utrecht was in Frankish hands by the time Willibrord returned from his second Rome trip (695).

32 *misit Pippin ... virum venerabilem Willibrordum Romam ... postulans ut eidem Fresionum genti archiepiscopus ordinaretur* (ibid., V, 11).

33 Sometime between 695 and 704 (M. WERNER, Der Lütticher Raum in frühkarolingischer Zeit, Göttingen 1980 [Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 62] p. 266).

34 Cf. S. J. CRAWFORD, Anglo-Saxon Influence on Western Christendom 600-800, New York 1933, p. 42.

35 Dom Philbert SCHMITZ, Geschichte des Benediktinerordens, Zürich 1947, p. 77.

36 R. M. STAUD and Joseph REUTER, Die kirchlichen Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Echternach, in: T'He-mecht V, 2/3 (1952), p. 11.

37 »... die Konstituierung einer friesischen Kirche mußte eine Schutzwehr für die fränkische Herrschaft werden« (HAUCK [see note 26] p. 406).

Radbod's daughter, Theudesinda³⁸. Willibrord's position, too, in Frankish Frisia seemed to be strengthening yearly. His ecclesiastical control over Toxandria in these years seems almost complete. Here he had many *Eigenkirchen* attached to his monastery Echternach on the middle Moselle and it is likely that any church then founded in Toxandria was dedicated by him³⁹. Judging from the charters preserved from the period for his abbey at Echternach, Willibrord enjoyed a veritable flood of donations of formerly Frisian land during these years from Franks newly settled in the area. Alexander Bergengruen concluded in his perceptive, if controversial, work that the pertinence *formulae* of their charters reveal that the donors were newly arrived in Toxandria from the Eifel. He also notes that since their holdings were not yet divided into many *portiones*, they first settled in Toxandria in the second half of the seventh century⁴⁰. The first charter of theirs which we have for Echternach dates from 704⁴¹. Given the Frisian political situation, I would place their arrival in the 690s. Such a date also explains why the donors after 704 seem only one generation removed from the original settlers.

If Willibrord supported Martel as early as 716, it means that he deserted Plectrud before Martel defeated her and took the leadership of his father's family. This was a major about-face for the politically powerful prelate, for it had been Plectrud and her family, often to the detriment of Alpaïda and hers, who had supported Willibrord with landed donations in the very area where Martel's maternal family had its base⁴².

As in many important matters Merovingian and early Carolingian, we have no direct report about who stood with Charles Martel at the battle of Vinchy. This is particularly frustrating since the author of the *LHF* indicates that Vinchy was Martel's most significant military success in the early years of his rise to power⁴³. In order to see if we are correct in supposing that Willibrord offered his support, we must try our hand at what Krusch rightly called »the hardly pleasant inquiry«⁴⁴ of calculating early medieval chronology. Our first firm indication that a strong bond had been formed between Willibrord and Charles Martel is Alcuin's report that Willibrord baptized Martel's son, the future king Pippin⁴⁵. Although Alcuin gives no date for the event, we do have two pieces of information which help to date it. The first is the date of Pippin's birth. Even to determine this we must count backwards from his death date. The *Annales Laurissenses Minores* tell us he died on 24

38 *LHF* (see note 1) ch. 50, and the *Annales Mettenses Priores* ed. B. DE SIMSON, Hannover–Leipzig 1905 (MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol.) for their year 711.

39 C. WAMPACH, Das Apostolat des heiligen Willibrords in den Vorlanden der eigentlichen Frisia, in: *Annalen des Historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein*, 155/6 (1954) pp. 249–250.

40 Alexander BERGENGRUEN, *Adel und Grundherrschaft im Merowingerreich*. Wiesbaden 1958, pp. 113–115.

41 WAMPACH, Echternach I–2 (see note 4) no. 11, pp. 34–36.

42 See GERBERDING (note 3) pp. 118–131.

43 *LHF* (see note 1) ch. 53.

44 »parum iucunda disquisitione«, Bruno KRUSCH, *Chronologica Regnum Francorum Stirpis Merovingicae, Catalogi, Computationes Annorum vetustae cum Commentariis*, Hannover 1920 (MGH SRM VII) p. 479.

45 Alcuin, *Vita Willibrordi* (see note 23) ch. 23. A. ANGENENDT, *Taufe und Politik im frühen Mittelalter*, in: *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 8 (1973) pp. 145–146 discusses the political bond indicated by the choice of baptizing priest. See also E. VACANDARD, *Vie de Saint Ouen*, Paris 1902, p. 54.

September 768 in the fifty-fourth year of his life⁴⁶. If he had passed his fifty-third birthday on or before 24 September 768, he must have been born between 25 September 714 and 24 September 715. Our second help comes from a charter of Plectrud's grandson, Arnulf, which shows that Plectrud's side of the family still donated land to Willibrord sometime between 3 September 715 and 28 February 717⁴⁷. They would, of course, cease donating to the bishop once he had deserted them for Martel's side and thus the charter would have to have been issued before Pippin's baptism. This means, then, that Willibrord would have baptized Martel's son at the next appropriate occasion after 3 September 715. In the eighth century the usual Frankish practice, especially when a bishop was present, was to baptize at Easter vigil or perhaps Pentecost⁴⁸. The future king then would have been brought to the font at Easter or Pentecost of 716, that is, after the battle at Amblève and before the battle of Vinchy⁴⁹.

Why did he do it? If Echternach's cartulary (as Camille Wampach has presented it to us) is at all a good indication, in 716 Willibrord certainly owed nothing to Martel but a great deal to Plectrud and her family. Why would Willibrord desert his major benefactor? Once again, the answer may be found in the politics of this important year.

Pippin's death in 714⁵⁰ brought about an abrupt change not only for Willibrord's new Frisian church but for Pippinid fortunes in general. Willibrord's old nemesis, Radbod, once again took up arms and moved southwards, reconquering much of the territory Pippin had earlier won from him⁵¹. Willibrord was forced to flee Utrecht and seems to have taken refuge at Echternach, far to the south on the middle Moselle⁵². The death of the old ruler caused a scramble for power within the Pippinid house, with Plectrud on the one side seeking to rule through her heirs and Martel on the other trying to capture his father's position. Plectrud actually held Martel

46 ed. G. H. PERTZ, p. 117.

47 *Diplomata* (see note 9) no. 7, p. 96 = WAMPACH, *Echternach I-2* (see note 4) no. 25, pp. 60-63.

48 See H. BECK, *The Pastoral Care of Souls in Southeastern France During the Sixth Century*, in: *Analecta Gregoriana* 51 (1950) pp. 166-182; P. DE PUNIET, »Baptême«, in: F. CABROL and H. LECLERCQ, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* 2, Paris 1910, cols 329-330; T. MAERTENS, *Histoire et pastorale du rituel du catéchuménat et du baptême*, Bruges 1962, pp. 260-261; and J. LYNCH, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe*, Princeton 1986, pp. 289-295.

49 Pippin's birth-date and date of baptism are usually listed as 714 (Th. BREYSSIG, *Jahrbücher des fränkischen Reiches 714-741: Die Zeit Karl Martels*, Leipzig 1869, p. 9; I. HEIDRICH, *Titulatur und Urkunden der arnulfingischen Hausmeier*, in: *Archiv für Diplomatik* 11/12 [1965/66] p. 202; and W. LEVISON [714/715], in: *Vita Erminonis*, Hannover-Leipzig 1913 [MGH SRM VI] p. 468, note 2). If, however, the above reasoning about the date of Pippin's baptism is correct, we can then define the range of dates for his birth more closely to between Easter (or Pentecost) of 715 and 24 September of the same year. The same reasoning helps to narrow the range of possible dates for Duke Arnulf's charter (*Diplomata*, see note 9) no. 7, p. 96 = WAMPACH, *Echternach I-2* (see note 4) no. 25, pp. 60-63 to between 3 September 715 and Easter or Pentecost of 716. See GERBERDING (note 3) p. 135, note 13 where I got the dates in September wrong.

50 *medio Decembrio* (Annales Tiliani for their year 714 [see note 15] p. 6).

51 LHF (see note 1) ch. 51. See above, note 15 and BREYSSIG (see note 49) pp. 21-23.

52 Willibald, *Vita Bonifatii*, ch. 4, ed. W. LEVISON, Hannover-Leipzig 1905 (MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol.) p. 16. WAMPACH, *Echternach I-1* (see note 4) pp. 62-63.

incarcerated for a period, probably at Cologne⁵³. The problems were not all Austrasian. The Neustrians of the Seine-Oise valley soon reasserted themselves against the Pippinid party, now represented by Plectrud's young grandson, Theudoald, who had been made Neustrian mayor of the palace by one of Pippin's last commands⁵⁴. Taking advantage of the crisis within the Pippin's house⁵⁵, the Neustrians launched a full-scale rebellion to drive the Pippinids from Neustria. The two sides clashed in the Forest of Compiègne, probably on 26 September, 715⁵⁶. The Pippinids were soundly defeated and Theudoald escaped only by flight⁵⁷. In the wake of this conflict, the Neustrians elected one of their own number, Raganfred, mayor, placed a former cleric and supposed son of Childeric II named Daniel on the throne as Chilperic II, and followed up their victory by pushing across the Meuse to the Rhine where they extracted Pippinid treasure from Plectrud. On their return to Neustria, Martel ambushed them at Amblève⁵⁸. What Radbod had reappropriated was, one could almost say, Willibrord's life's work. Willibrord's missionary activity had been limited almost exclusively to Frankish Frisia. Alcuin relates that shortly after Willibrord's return from his second Rome trip, he tried again to convert Radbod and the independent Frisians, but with no more success than he had had on his first encounter with them. He goes on to describe his failed attempt to convert Ongendus, king of the Danes⁵⁹. After these unsuccessful ventures, Willibrord returned ... *ad Pippinum ducem Francorum*...⁶⁰ We know from extant copies of donation charters that Willibrord had been given a considerable number of properties in Thuringia by Duke Heden⁶¹. These were probably the financial base for missionary work in that area, but nowhere do we hear that he had any early success there. Although his great monastery at Echternach was not, of course, Frisian, its position, both geographically and organizationally, had much to do with Pippinid family politics and much of its landed wealth lay in Toxandria⁶². Thus it seems that the lands now once again under Radbod's control were the most important ones to

53 ... *Plectrudis* ... *Karolum etiam privignum non erubuit custodiae mancipare Colonia civitate* (Vita Erminonis Episcopi et Abbatis Lobbiensis II, ch. 4, which Levison adds to his edition Vita I in [see note 49] p. 465). Echternach's Liber Aureus (1191), however, claims he was held at Aachen (Wartz, Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde 11 [1851-1858] pp. 338ff.).

54 LHF, ch. 50.

55 J. SEMMLER, Zur pippinidisch-karolingischen Sukzessionskrise 714-723, in: Deutsches Archiv 33 (1977) p. 6.

56 LHF (see note 1) ch. 51, and the Annales Mettenses Priores for their year 714 (see note 38) p. 20. The date comes from Willibrord's Calendar. See L. LEVILLAIN and C. SAMARAN, Sur le lieu et la date de la bataille dite de Poitiers 732 in: Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des chartes 99 (1938) pp. 251ff.; Wilhelm LEVISON, A propos du calendrier de saint Willibrord in: Revue Bénédictine 50 (1938) p. 39; SEMMLER (see note 55) p. 7; and J. LAPORTE, Les Monastères francs et l'avènement des Pippinides, in: Revue Mabillon 30 (1940) p. 20.

57 LHF (see note 1) ch. 51.

58 *ibid.*, ch. 52.

59 Alcuin, Vita Willibrordi (see note 23) ch. 9.

60 *ibid.*, ch. 11.

61 WAMPACH, Echternach I-2 (see note 4) no. 8 (May, 704), pp. 27-31 and no. 26 (April, 717), pp. 63-65.

62 In Wampach's edition (Echternach I-2 [see note 4]) we find the following lands in Toxandria all donated to Willibrord or Echternach by the time of the Frisian uprising: Waalre (704: no. 11, p. 3); Alphen and Bern (709: no. 16, pp. 43-44); Baschot, Hulsel, and Hapert (710: no. 17, p. 46); Erzel and Diessen (712: no. 20, p. 50) and Levetlaus (712: no. 21, p. 52).

Willibrord. After the conflict at Amblève it would have been obvious to him who was in the best position to regain for him his diocese, his missions, Echternach's possessions, and his *Eigenkirchen* from the Frisians. It certainly was not Plectrud in Cologne, but rather the recently successful strongman from nearby Liège. Willibrord wisely made the switch.

I am not the first to have suspected that the great Anglo-Saxon missionary supported Martel at Vinchy; others have indicated they thought Martel enjoyed Willibrord's support, but for a different reason. I am afraid that, although I agree with the conclusion, I should like to take issue with the reasoning. On 23 February, 718, nearly a year after the battle of Vinchy, Charles Martel donated his inherited portion of the villa Bollendorf to the church of Saints Peter and Paul at Echternach⁶³. Many have seen this as an act of gratitude on Martel's part for the support Willibrord provided him at Vinchy⁶⁴. To my knowledge, gratitude to a recipient is never mentioned in the contemporary charters as a motivation for the donation of land, nor do I recall historians putting it forth in any case other than this one. From the language of the charter itself we learn that Martel claimed to have inherited the land from Pippin⁶⁵. Bollendorf lies on the Sûre, not far from Echternach, that is, in the heart of Plectrud's family possessions. We know from an earlier charter that Plectrud's grandson, Arnulf, also had part of Bollendorf by hereditary right⁶⁶. By February 718, Martel had defeated Plectrud, taken Pippin's treasure from her, and was acting as his father's heir and head of the family. Keeping in mind the exclusive provisions Plectrud had made for the position of her heirs in her charter for Sustern, one wonders how secure Martel's »hereditary right« to Bollendorf, land which came to Pippin through Plectrud, would have been if her heirs were still about. In fact, Martel's charter mentions the other heirs in the curious phrase: ... *quod contra allodiones meos recepi*. We have good reason to suspect that as late as 723 Plectrud's side of the family was still causing trouble for Charles Martel⁶⁷. Rather than out of gratitude for help at Vinchy, would not Martel have donated this large property on the middle Moselle in order to place it in the secure possession of a supporter? This would be the case especially if his hereditary claim were not all too strong, and giving the land to Echternach would dispel claim to it by other potential heirs not at all happy with his leading position. I hope my reasoning in this article has made it probable that Willibrord had indeed deserted Plectrud for Martel's side before the battle of Vinchy; I do not think, however, we should use his donation of Bollendorf as evidence for his help at that decisive encounter.

Willibrord was not the only close adherent to Plectrud's side of the family to have deserted her for Martel before he won the battle of Vinchy. On Sunday 31 May, 716 the relics of Saint Lambert, former bishop of Maastricht, were solemnly translated

63 WAMPACH, Echternach I-2 (see note 4) no. 27, pp. 65-68 = Diplomata (see note 9) no. 9, p. 97.

64 BREYSSIG (see note 49) p. 24; HAUCK (see note 26) p. 442; WAMPACH, Echternach I-2 (see note 4) p. 66; and PRINZ, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich. Kultur und Gesellschaft in Gallien, den Rheinlanden und Bayern am Beispiel der monastischen Entwicklung, Darmstadt 1988, p. 209.

65 ... *Quantumcumque mihi ibidem obvenit de genitore meo Pippino...*

66 WAMPACH, Echternach I-2 (see note 4) no. 25, pp. 60-63 = Diplomata (see note 9) no. 7, p. 96.

67 723. *duo filii Drogonis ligati unus mortuus...* (Annales Petaviani [see note 15] p. 7, and Annales Nazariani [see note 15] p. 149).

from the episcopal seat to the small town of Liège and laid in the basilica which bore his name⁶⁸. Hubert, the current bishop of Maastricht and close relative of Plectrud⁶⁹, officiated. Liège was in the very heart of area Martel's maternal family held sway, and it must have been quite a coup for the family to have gained the translation of an important local saint and martyr from the episcopal seat to a villa in their heartland. It is a safe assumption that Bishop Hubert not only enjoyed Martel's close cooperation in the venture, but more than likely was following his bidding. Indeed, the *Vita Lamberti* tells us that the translation took place *collecto cum senioribus loci illius consilio*⁷⁰. Since it had been Martel's family under the leadership of his uncle Dodo and his henchmen who had murdered Lambert in the first place, this translation is a dramatic sign that a significant reconciliation had taken place between the family and the see at Maastricht. In fact, Bishop Hubert may have deserted his relative Plectrud for Martel's side earlier than the date of Lambert's translation. We find Hubert's signature as the current bishop on two charters for Echternach from 13 May, 706⁷¹, but in Plectrud's charter of 714 which donates Sustern to Willibrord and makes specific provisions to foster Plectrud's heirs and thereby exclude Alpaida's, Hubert's signature is missing, even though he was still the reigning local bishop⁷². Lambert seems to have been a saint for whom Charles Martel had a particular fondness for all the earliest known centers of his cult were in places where Martel had direct control. In Liège itself there was a church dedicated to him before 714⁷³. In 716 basilicas were built for him in Nivelles-sur-Meuse and in Herstall⁷⁴, and in 721 also in Bakel⁷⁵. If Camille Wampach's conclusions are correct, in Hubert, Martel would have gained not only a powerful bishop and protector of an influential local cult, but a magnate of considerable political stature and experience in high places⁷⁶.

68 *Vita Landiberti Episcopi Traiectensis Vetustissima*, ch. 25 (see note 10) p. 378–381. the date is Krusch's (*ibid.*, p. 306) and must be determined by calculation. In the Bern manuscript of Jerome's Martyrology, a marginal note records Saint Lambert at 31 May. The usual day for a translation of relics was a Sunday; May 31, 716 was a Sunday. Bishop Hubert carried out the translation in the thirteenth year of his episcopacy. Since Lambert was murdered in 703 and Hubert was his successor, the translation occurred in 716.

69 LEVISON (see note 49) says he enjoyed a *necessitudinem quandam artiozem* with her family. WAMPACH, Echternach I–1 (see note 4) p. 130 considers him a direct relative with a notable political career behind him before he became bishop. See also Karl Ferdinand WERNER, *Bedeutende Adelsfamilien im Reiche Karls des Großen*, in: Wolfgang BRAUNFELS (ed.), *Karl der Grosse 1*, Düsseldorf 1965, p. 116. Eugen EWIG (Milo et eiusmodi similes, in: Heinrich BÜTTNER et al. [eds.], *Sankt Bonifatius-Gedenkgabe zum zwölfhunderdsten Todestag*, Fulda 1954, p. 423) suspected that Hubert was Plectrud's father who had the same name. But her father is called ›quondam‹ in a charter of 706 (Diplomata [see note 9] no. 4, p. 93).

70 *Vita Landiberti Vet.*, ch. 25 (see note 10) p. 379.

71 WAMPACH, Echternach 1–2 (see note 4) no. 14, p. 40, and no. 15, p. 43 = Diplomata (see note 9) no. 4, p. 94, and no. 5, p. 95.

72 WAMPACH, Echternach 1–2, (see note 4) no. 24, p. 60 = Diplomata (see note 9) no. 6, p. 96. He was bishop of Maastricht-Liège from 703 to 726. See: Joseph SEMMLER, *Episcopi potestas und Karolingische Klosterpolitik*, in: *Mönchtum, Episkopat und Adel zur Gründungszeit der Reichenau*, ed. A. BORST, Sigmaringen 1974 (Vorträge und Forschungen 20) p. 316.

73 LHF (see note 1) ch. 50.

74 *Vita Landiberti Vet.* (see note 10) ch. 26.

75 WAMPACH, Echternach I–1 (see note 4) no. 30, p. 72.

76 »Aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach ist Bischof Hugobertus zu identifizieren mit dem Seneschalk Chugobercthus, der 693–694 in der Umgebung des Merovingers Chlodwig III. zu Valenciennes erscheint«

We can see others on Martel's side at Vinchy. Milo, member of the episcopal dynasty at Trier which had a long history of cooperation with Willibrord, may have supported Charles, although we cannot say so with any certainty⁷⁷. We are told expressly that Benignus, former abbot of Saint-Wandrille, near Rouen, was with Martel at Vinchy⁷⁸. But since he was by then deposed as abbot⁷⁹ and thus did not command the resources of Saint-Wandrille, and since Hugo, the more important representative of the local nobility near Rouen, did not aid Martel, it is hard imagine that Benignus could have mustered much support from the lower Seine for Charles. With the Thuringian duke Heden and his son, who may have fought and died at Vinchy⁸⁰, our list of Charles' supporters whom the sources let us glimpse or even suspect comes to an end⁸¹. It seems that his support, as best we can see it, was entirely Austrasian. In fact, we have some information which shows us that it was probably limited to a certain section of Austrasia, that is, from his maternal lands around Liège on the Meuse to the area represented by Willibrord, and possibly Milo, on the middle Moselle around Echternach. Since after his victory at Vinchy he found it necessary to advance on Cologne to deal with Plectrud⁸², we can assume that she and not he controlled that area. We also note that some two and a half months after the battle, Raganfred's king, Chilperic II, donated land to Saint Arnulf's monastery in Metz⁸³. This is a good indication that Martel had not yet won influence in that area. It seems, then, that his enemies were still active to the northeast and to the south of his supporters' lands. It was not a large area which provided Charles Martel the forces with which he faced the Frisians and the Neustrians at Vinchy on 21 March, 717, but it was large enough to give him the day.

Are there any general lessons we may learn from our rather specific inquiry? I would venture two, both rather obvious, but nonetheless important. First, the events of 716 caution us against treating battles as the most significant steps in the Pippinids' rise to power. More important than dramatic national confrontations, is the slow and steady acquisition of land and influence on the local level. Recent sound thinking is also lowering the significance formerly given the battle of Tertry in the acquisition of

Diplomata Regnum Francorum e Stirpe Merowingica, ed. K. A. PERTZ, Hannover 1872 (MGH Dipl. Imp. I) no. 66, p. 58, »im Jahre 697 aber zum Pfalzgraf aufgerückt war,« (ibid., no. 70, p. 62) »und zu dessen Nachkommen gewiß auch jener Pfalzgraf Hugbertus gehört, der 747 mit Karlmann genannt wird« (ibid., no. 16, p. 103). WAMPACH, Echternach I-1 (see note 4) p. 130.

77 We know he became bishop of Trier sometime between 715 and 720 and that he later became one of Martel's staunchest supporters. See EWIG (see note 69) p. 13; Louis DUCHESNE, *Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule III*, Paris 1915, p. 39; and PRINZ *Frühes Mönchtum* (see note 64) p. 208.

78 *Nam in praefato proelio ... Benignus vero partibus Karoli favebat* (Gesta Sanctorum Patrum Fontanellensis Coenobii, III, 1, F. LOHIER and R. P. J. LAPORTE [eds.], Paris-Rouen 1936, p. 23).

79 In 716, the Neustrian mayor, Raganfred, deposed Benignus as abbot of Saint-Wandrille and installed his own supporter, Wando (Gesta Font., III, 1 [see note 78] p. 23).

80 WAMPACH, Echternach I-1 (see note 4) pp. 4-45.

81 Others wish to include Eucherius, bishop of Orleans and Peppo, bishop of Verdun, as Martel's supporters early enough to have them lend support at Venchy. See GERBERDING (note 3) pp. 139-140, note 39, where I present evidence to the contrary.

82 LHF (see note 1) ch. 53.

83 Diplomate (see note 76) no. 89, pp. 78-79.

Neustrian power by Martel's father, Pippin⁸⁴. Pippin's control of the west was acquired far more by gaining the loyalty of the local nobility along with the ecclesiastical and lay offices-holders of the land, than by any dramatic victory over the Neustrians militarily. So too it will be the support of figures such as Willibrord, Hubert, Heden, and Milo which will provide the real base for Martel's eventual ascendancy. Second, the events of 716 remind us of the crucial role of women in Frankish politics. It is obvious that Plectrud and Alpaida were major players. In many ways, Charles Martel's early political career can be seen to have been set amid a clash between his mother and his stepmother.

SUMMARY

The year 716 was a crucial one in the early career of Charles Martel. Within a few short months he was able to expand his powerbase beyond that which his mother's family provided him to one of considerable force able to defeat the Neustrians at Vinchy on 21 March 717. The change in Martel's fortunes came about largely through the defection of the powerful in the faction which gathered around his stepmother, Plectrud. The most significant of these, or at least the one most visible to our eyes, was Plectrud's own most important cleric and abbot of her monastery at Echternach, the Anglo-Saxon Willibrord. We suspect that he left his primary benefactress and joined her renegade stepson because of the need to protect his life's work, the mission field in Frisia.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

716 war für Karl Martells Aufstieg ein entscheidendes Jahr. Innerhalb weniger Monate gelang es ihm, die ursprünglich durch die Stellung seiner Mutter begünstigten Grundlagen seiner Macht erheblich zu erweitern. Vor diesem Hintergrund ist sein Sieg über die Neustrier am 21. März 717 bei Vinchy zu sehen, denn dieser kam vor allem durch den Frontwechsel führender Anhänger seiner Stiefmutter Plectrud zustande. Darunter war der Angelsachse Willibrord der wichtigste, oder wenigstens der für uns am deutlichsten erkennbare Abtrünnige von Plectruds Sache. Er war Abt des Klosters Echternach und setzte sich wohl von seiner einstigen Wohltäterin ab, um von Karl Martell Schutz für sein Lebenswerk, die Mission in Friesland, zu bekommen.

RÉSUMÉ

L'année 716 fut déterminante pour le début du pouvoir de Charles Martel. En quelques brefs mois, Charles fut à même d'étendre la base de son pouvoir au-delà de ce que la famille de sa mère lui avait donné et de rassembler une force considérable capable de battre les Neustriens à Vinchy le 21 mars 717. Le succès de Charles Martel est, dans une large mesure, dû à la défection de puissants membres de la faction qui s'était rassemblée autour de sa belle-mère Plectrude. Le plus important de ceux-ci (en tout cas, le plus apparent à nos yeux) est le principal clerc de Plectrude, l'abbé de son monastère d'Echternach, l'Anglo-saxon Willibrord: il quitta vraisemblablement sa première bienfaitrice pour rejoindre le beau-fils renégat de celle-ci, parce qu'il lui fallait protéger le travail de sa vie, les missions en Frise.

84 Roger COLLINS, *Early Medieval Europe 300–1000*, New York 1991, pp. 248–49; and Ian WOOD, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450–534* (forthcoming), ch. 13.