R O S A M O N D   M C K I T T E R I C K

Court and communication in the early Middle Ages: the Frankish kingdom under Charlemagne

By the end of the eighth century, Charlemagne's kingdom extended from Brittany to the Danube Bend, and from north of the Elbe to the duchy of Spoleto in Italy. This vast empire was distinctive for the plurality of its political and administrative centres. Indeed, the Carolingian 'topography' of power, partly manifested in what has aptly been described as a "great chain of palaces", has been regarded as a model instance of the decentralization of political power in the post-Roman world.[1] Such perceived decentralization, as is made clear by many contributions to this volume, has even led in the past to the demotion of early medieval polities as states or even as 'moving towards statehood'. Yet there is no particularly compelling reason why the different power structures and methods by which rulers were able to exert power over their subjects in the early Middle Ages should disqualify them as states, any more than it has for later medieval or early modern polities.[2] Attempts to describe states as 'medieval' or 'modern' where peculiar characteristics are assumed rather than the terms being used as mere chronological differentiation, moreover, are not particularly helpful. Contemporary Frankish thinking about rulership and government in the eighth and ninth centuries drew on a complex ideological inheritance from Graeco-Roman antiquity as well as the Bible.[3] Chris Wickham's recent definition of a state, moreover, provides a possible framework of empirical criteria, as distinct from an abstract theory of a state, within which to assess methods of rule and control in the early Middle Ages. He suggests the following defining characteristics: "The centralization of legitimate enforceable authority (justice and the army); the specialization of governmental roles within an official hierarchy that outlived the people who held position at any one time; the concept of public power of a ruling system ideologically separable from the ruled population and the individual rulers themselves; independent and stable resources for rulers; and a class-based system of surplus extraction and stratification"[4]. Elites within such a state in the early Middle Ages were legitimized by their connection with public spheres of power.[5] A further consideration is the degree to which the state was involved in the provision of welfare. We should also add the notion of a state as a site of loyalty and the means for providing a focus for social unity among its people, for which there is ample evidence in the Carolingian period.[6]

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[1] See Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages, ed. Mayke de Jong/Frans Theuws/Carine van Rhijn (The Transformation of the Roman World 6, Leiden/Boston/Köln 2001); esp. Janet L. Nelson, Aachen as a place of power, in: ibid. 217–242, at 222. See also Stuart Airlie, The palace of memory: the Carolingian court as political centre, in: Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe, ed. Sarah Rees Jones/Richard Marks/Alastair J. Minnis (York/Woodbridge 2000) 1–20.

[2] The Medieval State. Essays Presented to James Campbell, ed. John Maddicott/David Palliser (London 2000); Joseph Strayer, On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State (Princeton 1970); The Development of the Modern State, ed. Heinz Lubasz (New York/London 1964); James Campbell, The Anglo-Saxon State (London 2000); Stuart Airlie, The aristocracy in the service of the state in the Carolingian period, in: Staat im frühen Mittelalter, ed. id./Walter Pohl/Helmut Reimitz (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11, Wien 2006) 93–111.

[3] Peter Stein, Roman Law in European History (Cambridge 1999); Raymund Kottje, Studien zum Einfluß des Alten Testaments auf Recht und Liturgie des frühen Mittelalters, 6.–8. Jahrhundert (Bonner Historische Forschungen 23, Bonn ²1970); Mayke de Jong, Ecclesia and the early medieval polity, in: Staat im frühen Mittelalter, ed. Stuart Airlie/Walter Pohl/Helmut Reimitz (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11, Wien 2006) 113–132.

[4] Chris Wickham, Framing the Early Middle Ages. Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800 (Oxford 2005) 57.

[5] See also the range of discussions in Staat im frühen Mittelalter, ed. Stuart Airlie/Walter Pohl/Helmut Reimitz (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11, Wien 2006).

[6] Rosamond McKitterick, History and Memory in the Carolingian World (Cambridge 2004).

The modern notion of the state has often been thought to be the antithesis of what has been claimed to be personal bonds institutionalized in a medieval polity, though such an exclusive emphasis on personal bonds has been challenged.[7] Modern historians have also been wont to invoke Jürgen Habermas's definition of the public sphere as if it were exclusively a post-Enlightenment phenomenon.[8] But aspects of the justification of rule, and the forms of dialogue between ruler and ruled in the early Middle Ages suggest both that one needs to accommodate a wider applicability of current definitions of the public sphere and the state, and that slavish adherence to a model regarded as only emergent in the eighteenth century can obstruct understanding of political behaviour in other times and places.

In his contribution to the earlier Vienna conference on this topic, "Staat im frühen Mittelalter", Patrick Wormald suggested that we would do better to "start out from what pre-modern polities can be shown to have done; then and only then, consider what label we can best affix to them"[9]. Certainly it is best to consider what the various early medieval politics did actually do, but there is no necessity for a label. By definition, such a label would be taken from another precise context, and its applicability may therefore be approximate. We would do better to understand each medieval polity on its own terms, even if by so doing the notion of 'state' can only function as an umbrella term. Indeed, it is clear from the various contributions to this volume that this is how it is being used and has to be used, for no-one would wish to ignore the various polities that would merit the general label 'state'. Emphasis has tended to be laid on the differences between states whereas an alternative approach would be to reflect on the implications of the similarities. Just as there are many shapes, sizes, breeds and hybrids of 'dog' so may there be of 'state'. The question, 'when is a state not a state' could end up as fruitless an enquiry as 'when is a dog not a dog' (though it needs to be remembered that a certain Cambridge College Council in the 1960s 'deemed' a Fellow's dog to be a cat so as to comply with College regulations about animals permitted to live within the college!). An early medieval state could then, in theory, be 'deemed' to be something else but only by denying that there was a "sense of a large-scale political community among peoples" in the early Middle Ages.[10]

For historians considering political organization and methods of rule and government, definitions and a set of empirical criteria can prove a Procrustean bed. But the common element of any notion of the state remains the relations between the ruler and the people, and the "peculiarities of the organization of power" however these might be orchestrated. These remain an abiding focus of interest and historical enquiry.[11] An alternative mode of examination, therefore, might be to explore the qualitative dimension of a state in terms of the orchestration of relations between a ruler and the people, hence my focus on communication and evidence for the means of communication in the Frankish realm.[12]

Given that the degree of 'centralisation', insofar as the Frankish kingdoms under the early Carolingians (Pippin III and Charlemagne) are concerned, might be debatable, my overall hypothesis in this paper is that the degree to which the ruler, whether personally or through his official hierarchy, was able to communicate with all peoples and areas under his authority is as important as the degree to which control was effectively exercised. The extent to which the means by which the king communicated with his people were institutionalized and regularized also needs to be registered. I wish to add

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[7] See Matthew Innes, State and Society in the Early Middle Ages. The Middle Rhine Valley, 400–1000 (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Fourth Series, Cambridge 2000).

[8] Jürgen Habermas, Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft (Berlin ²1965), engl.: id., The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (Cambridge-Mass. 1990); see also Tim Blanning, The Pursuit of Glory. Europe 1648–1815 (London 2007), for various applications of the notion, for example 333–335.

[9] See the suggestive remarks by Patrick Wormald, Pre-modern 'state' and 'nation': definite or indefinite?, in: Staat im frühen Mittelalter, ed. Stuart Airlie/Walter Pohl/Helmut Reimitz (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11, Wien 2006) 179–189.

[10] Wormald, Pre-modern 'state' 189.

[11] The phrase is that of Innes, State and Society 263.

[12] Rosamond McKitterick, Charlemagne: the Formation of a European Identity (Cambridge 2008), dt.: ead., Karl der Große (Darmstadt 2008) 214–291.

to this proposition in what follows by exploring further the role of the royal notaries of Charlemagne's writing office or 'chancery' in mediating between the political systems of centre and locality.[13]

COMMUNICATION

In considering the mechanisms for communication between the ruler and the people, the general assumption has been that Pippin III, and especially his heir Charlemagne, like many later medieval rulers in Germany, relied primarily on itinerancy in order to enforce the king's rule with his presence. I have argued in my study of Charlemagne's court and government that it is inappropriate to characterise Charlemagne as an itinerant monarch, whatever one might wish to claim for his heirs. Further, Charlemagne's methods of communication and government involved a complex network of officials and agents.[14] This judgment is based on my analysis of Charlemagne's charters in conjunction with all the capitularies, letters and narrative sources which shed any light at all on the king's movements throughout his reign. If one charts the king's movements for every year of his reign between 768 and 814, it becomes clear that his primary sphere of operation was the Frankish heartlands and an area encompassing the Seine river basin, Picardy and Champagne, and the middle to lower Rhine regions, with an additional concentration of military activity in Saxony, especially between the Ems and Weser rivers. Only three times in Charlemagne's reign did he venture south of the Loire and on three other occasions to Bavaria. He made five expeditions to Italy. If the military campaigns are taken out of the equation, then Charlemagne's movements were limited to the region between the Seine and the Rhine rivers, his long sojourn in Bavaria 791–793, the famous meeting in Paderborn in 799, and his visits to Rome in 781 and 800. He never ever saw some parts of his realm, notably the southern and eastern regions, Rhône-Saône river valleys and Provence, the Alpine regions, and most of Bavaria, in the entire near-half century of rule. But this is emphatically not the same as saying people in or from these regions never communicated with the king, or he with them.

Rather than documenting his itinerary, I propose that the charters attest to his network of officials. That is to say, instead of accepting the statements in the charters drawn up in the king's name in particular palaces as unequivocal indications of the king's presence, the information provided in the eschatacol of the royal diplomas, that is the notarial signatures and date and place clauses, are the means by which we chart the activity of the king's notaries. There was no need for the king physically to be present when a charter was redacted. We should take heed of the few charters which expressly record the king's presence and the very large number which do not. The former signal a king presiding over legal hearings possibly organized by the count of the palace; the latter are more often the consequences of the royal decisions to bestow patronage, or of the positive response to petitions and requests for royal favour.

We should not assume from the number of times there is a correlation between the king's presence for Christmas and Easter at a palace and a group of charters redacted there, as in the winter of 796–797 or the years after 806, that his presence was a necessary condition for their redaction. It is also crucial to remember the unevenness, geographically and chronologically, of charter survival, and that for the years 784, 785, 789, 793, 796, 804 and 814 no charters are extant at all.[15]

The twenty-two surviving charters for the year 775 highlight the problems of using them to map a notional royal itinerary and point instead to the delegation of charter redaction to the royal notaries, acting on behalf of the king. As I have explained in detail elsewhere, between 5th January and 26th June 775 there was a series of charters drawn up at Quierzy. The dates given are 5th and 22nd January, 14th March, 4th April, 24th and 29th May, 9th and 26th June. During these six months one charter was also drawn up at St Denis on 25th February and two at Thionville on 3rd and 10th May. For the rest of the

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[13] For important preliminary remarks on the involvement of beneficiaries in charter production see Mark Mersiowsky, Towards a reappraisal of Carolingian sovereign charters, in: Charters and the Use of the Written Word in Medieval Society, ed. Karl Heidecker (Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy, Turnhout 2000) 15–26; Mark Mersiowsky, Die Urkunde in der Karolingerzeit. Originale, Urkundenpraxis und politische Kommunikation (MGH Schriften 60, Hannover 2009).

[14] In what follows, I draw on the full exposition in McKitterick, Charlemagne 171–212.

[15] McKitterick, Charlemagne 197–199.

year charters are recorded at Düren 28th July, 3rd August, 25th October, and November. Thionville is recorded again in November, and the last document for the year is at Sélestat in December. In the case of St Denis in February, Düren in July and Sélestat in December, the transactions are actually recorded as being drawn up or enacted at a meeting where the king was to administer justice in the place concerned. The Quierzy documents record business concerning very distant places in Germany and Italy as well as closer to Quierzy at St Denis. The two Thionville charters concern places in Burgundy and the Loire region.

One also needs to look at this sequence of charters with the distances between the various places in mind and the time needed to travel from one place to another, generally calculated to be about 25 miles or 30 km per day.[16] Further, the charter evidence must be seen in conjunction with information from the Annales regni Francorum about where Charlemagne spent Christmas and Easter in 774 and 775. On the traditional reading, the charter evidence might then indicate a journey from Quierzy to St Denis between January and February, 110 km or 3–4 days distant via Noyon and Compiègne.[17] Then back again at Quierzy, grants were made to St Denis on 14th March of freedom from tolls and immunity.[18] In 775, Easter fell on March 26th which, according to the Annales regni Francorum, Charlemagne spent at Quierzy. The king then supposedly moved on to Thionville, a distance of 303 km or ten-days' journey, possibly via Reims, Chalons and Metz.[19] Thereafter, the king apparently returned, another ten-day journey of 303 km, to Quierzy.[20] The Annales regni Francorum record an assembly of the army at Düren before setting out for a summer campaign in Saxony. From Quierzy to Düren (between Aachen and Cologne) is 361 km or twelve days. Thereafter the Annales regni Francorum record the campaigns in the Weser river region, at least yet another ten days journey away, the capture of Syburg and the rebuilding of the Eresburg.[21] The charter of 28th July at Düren, however, was written by Theudegarius and records a settlement of a dispute between Fulrad of St Denis and Ercanrad bishop of Paris, presided over by Charlemagne, and in the presence of many *fideles*, including Anselm, count of the palace.[22] From Düren the charter record takes us 267 km or nine days journey to Thionville and there Rado *ad vicem Hitherii* wrote a grant of land to Salonne which survives in the original in the St Denis archive.[23] Lastly, at Sélestat, where Charlemagne spent Christmas 785 (according to the Annales regni Francorum) a dispute was again recorded by Theodegarius in the presence of Anselm, count of the palace, and the king himself.[24] It explains that the king was in his palace in Sélestat in order to listen to cases and give justice.[25]

If we were to accept the charter record literally then we would have to add in the 606 km round trip between Quierzy and Thionville in April and May. If we accept all the charters of Quierzy of 775 as an indication of the king's presence then the campaign in Saxony did not start until July. The charters issued from Düren are dated June, July, August and October which would require Charlemagne to be returning from the Weser river campaign, at least a ten-day journey, at regular intervals before finally reaching the palace of Thionville, in order to grant land to Salonne and Prüm, and subsequently Sélestat in December to judge the dispute between Honau and Corbie. Rather than accepting the charters

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[16] McKitterick, Charlemagne 181–182; see also Régine Le Jan, Espaces sauvages et chasses royales dans le Nord de la France, in: Revue du Nord 62 (1980) 35–57; Michael McCormick, Pippin III, the embassy of Caliph al-Mansur, and the Mediterranean world, in: Der Dynastiewechsel von 751. Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung, ed. Matthias Becher/Jörg Jarnut (Münster 2004) 221–242.

[17] D KdGr. 92 (775) (ed. Engelbert Mühlbacher, MGH DD Karolinorum 1, Die Urkunden Pippins, Karlmanns und Karls des Großen, Hannover 1906).

[18] D KdGr. 93 and 94 (775 March 14), ed. Mühlbacher (an original, written by Wigbald *ad vicem Hitherii*).

[19] D KdGr. 96 (775 May 3) and 97 (775 May 10), ed. Mühlbacher.

[20] D KdGr. 98–101 (775 May 24–775 June 26), ed. Mühlbacher.

[21] D KdGr. 102–105 (775 July 28–775 October 25), ed. Mühlbacher.

[22] D KdGr. 102 (775 July 28), ed. Mühlbacher.

[23] D KdGr. 107 (775 November), ed. Mühlbacher.

[24] D KdGr. 110 (775 December), ed. Mühlbacher.

[25] The formula is standard: For example, in D KdGr. 102 (775 July 28), ed. Mühlbacher, the formula is as follows: *cum nos in dei nomen Duria villa in palacio nostro ad universorum causas audiendum vel recta iudicia termenandum resederimus.* In D KdGr. 110 (775 December), ed. Mühlbacher, it is: *Cum nos in dei nomine sclatistati villa in palacio nostro ad universorum causas audiens dum vel recta iudicia terminandum resideremus.*

as an unequivocal indication of the physical presence of the king, therefore, I suggest that it is much more likely that we are seeing in many instances the activities of the king's officials, with notaries and the scribes working for them sent out or based on site to record transactions in the name of the king, possibly accompanied by the count of the palace. The itinerary for the year 775 is much more likely to have been simply from Quierzy to Düren to Saxony, back to Thionville and then on to Sélestat for Christmas (confirmed by the Annales regni Francorum) before Charlemagne set out for Italy the following year, with none of the zig-zagging back and forth that the charters have hitherto been thought to record. It would also suggest that we should take the ad vicem note in the charters more seriously as an indication of a notary acting as a deputy for the cancellarius when the latter was elsewhere. The indications are that Wigbald did indeed go to St Denis and remain at Quierzy to oversee transactions in the spring, and that both Rado and Wigbald acted for Hitherius at Düren during the Saxon campaigns of the summer and autumn.

To the example of 775, moreover, a number of others could be added, of charters redacted at times and in places where it would either have been impossible for the king to be present or make very little logistical sense. Having spent Christmas in Herstal in 771, for example, it would not make sense to go to Worms before attending an assembly in Valenciennes.[26] Use of notaries acting on behalf of the king is also indicated by the movements for the years 770–773. According to the various annal accounts, the king was present at an assembly in Worms in 770 with Christmas at Mainz, and then Herstal in the spring of 771, possibly on the way to the assembly in Valenciennes, with Christmas at Attigny in 771 and then at Herstal again for Easter in 772.[27] The settlement of the dispute at Longlier in 771 is in keeping with the king's movements recorded in the narrative sources, not least the meeting at Corbeny with Carloman's followers after Carloman's death.[28] It is not impossible that Charlemagne was present at Reims for the burial of his brother, for Reims, Samoussy, Attigny and Corbeny are all within one- or two-days journey from each other along the Roman road from Reims to Saint-Quentin nearby.[29] The text of the Herstal charter in 772 fits the narrative record of the itinerary, for it describes the settling of a dispute about Lorsch possessions.[30]

Acceptance of other charters from these years as indications of the king's presence, however, would again involve Charlemagne in a great deal of to-ing and fro-ing, with journeys to Worms in 771 and then over to Quierzy and to Longlier en route for Geneva in 773; these would have been major detours. In October 778, moreover, at Goddingas *villa* (Godinne) south-west of Liège, a charter to confirm St Denis's immunity was drawn up by Giltbertus *ad vicem Radonis* at a point when Charlemagne would still have been in Saxony, unless he took a circuitous route back from Saxony in the early autumn in order to arrive at Herstal, west of Aachen, for Christmas.[31] In the following year many annals record that Charlemagne retired to Worms for the winter after the Saxon campaigns, yet there is also a charter in favour of Hersfeld drawn up at Herstal in September, by Wigbald *ad vicem Radonis*, many miles from either the Saxon strongholds or the palace at Worms.[32] Given the extraordinary distances traversed to Saxony or to Rome, such a detour may be entirely reasonable, but it seems less likely than the charter drawn up by the anonymous notary being sent to Herstal for recognition, or the notary visiting Herstal to get the job done in the king's absence. This is especially the case if the beneficiaries and the lands granted, themselves far removed geographically from the place of redaction, are taken into account. In October 778 Charlemagne was en route between Saxony and Herstal, so it is unlikely he was present at Godinne when the charter was redacted by Gilbert acting for Rado.[33]

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[26] D KdGr. 61 (771 April 11), ed. Mühlbacher.
[27] Annales regni Francorum aa. 770 and 771 (ed. Friedrich Kurze, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. [6], Hannover 1892) 80 and 82.
[28] D KdGr. 63 (771 November 3), ed. Mühlbacher.
[29] On Carloman's burial see Annales Mettenses priores a. 771 (ed. Bernhard von Simson, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. [10], Hannover 1905) 57. Samoussy to Reims is 67 km (2 days) and to Corbeny less than a day (24 km). Corbeny to Attigny is 68 km or two days. From the assembly at Valenciennes down to Reims would take five or six days (172 km).
[30] D KdGr. 65, ed. Mühlbacher.
[31] D KdGr. 120 (778 October), ed. Mühlbacher.
[32] D KdGr. 126 (779 September 24), ed. Mühlbacher.
[33] D KdGr. 120 (778 October), ed. Mühlbacher.

Similarly, in 779, Charlemagne surely did not make the detour for the redaction of the charter of 23 September by Wigbald acting for Rado in travelling between Saxony and Worms, or diverted to Herstal on his way to spend the winter and Christmas at Quierzy at the end of 781.[34] The king was nowhere near Hersfeld or Gondreville at the time charters were redacted by Wigbald, again acting for Rado at Herstal on 28th July and 26th September 782 respectively.[35] If the king has to be presumed to be present, this would have involved doubling back to Thionville and an extra six-day journey at the end of the Saxon campaign that year.[36] Again it is unlikely he would have been diverted to Herstal or Düren in July and August when occupied further to the northeast.[37] These were also charters under Rado's aegis, though one was drawn up by Wigbald. 786 was a year that Charlemagne, according to all our other evidence, did not get as far north as Aachen, but Ercambald *ad vicem Radonis* drew up a charter there.[38]

Some places where charters were drawn up may well have been on the route taken and could have acted as feasible stopping places. Thus in returning to Worms from dealing with the revolt in Friuli in 776, the king may have chosen to go via Vicenza and Ivrea from which we have two charters dated 9th and 16th June on his way to cross the Alps by either Mont Cenis or, more likely, the Great St Bernard pass. Vicenza and Ivrea are approximately ten days (314 km) apart, though it might have been done faster.[39] Further on this hypothetical route is Patris Giaggio, possibly to be identified with present-day Prati Giaggio, where a charter attributed to Rado recorded a land grant to Nonantola. Mühlbacher noted that this place lay "on one of the routes from Ivrea to the Upper Rhine". He presumably had in mind that the next destination we can record after Ivrea is Worms. It is a possible route, though a very roundabout one, and a preferable route would have been via Aosta. It may be more practical, therefore, to think of this little Italian group as the consequence of a certain amount of written correspondence or requests delivered orally.

That the process of charter redaction could include a charter being drawn up elsewhere and brought to a palace for confirmation may be suggested by a document from 797. Here the recognitio was provided by Ercambald at Aachen but written by Genesius and with Pippin, king of Italy, acting as *ambasciator*. The charter recorded a transaction confirming the monastery of Nonantola's ownership of land given by a Lombard noble.[40] A further possibility is that the bare outline of the details were sent to the palace and the entire charter was then prepared and returned in due course to Nonantola.

Occasionally there are direct correlations between the places enjoying the king's presence in the narrative sources and the charter or capitulary record, as in the visit to Rome in 787, the Christmas and Easter 787–788 spent at Ingelheim and the assembly there on 28th March 788. There is a cluster of charters from Mainz, Worms and Kostheim during the year Charlemagne spent there in 790,[41] and his sojourn in Regensburg in 792 is also reflected in grants for Aniane and Aquileia drawn up there.[42] Conversely, if we look at the last twenty years of Charlemagne's reign in relation both to the places of charter redaction and to the summary above of the winters spent in Aachen or elsewhere, a similar pattern emerges. From the period from 794 to 803, with no charters surviving at all for the years 796 and 798, of twenty-seven charters, one third were redacted at Aachen. In the years 803, with no charters at all from 804 and 805, and a total of sixteen surviving charters, only four were produced somewhere other than Aachen. Seven of the remainder, dated at Aachen, were written between 811

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[34] D KdGr. 126 (779 September 24) and D KdGr. 136 (781 October), ed. Mühlbacher; see also Alain Stoclet, Autour de Fulrad de Saint-Denis, vv. 710–784 (Genève/Paris 1993); and ChLA 16, 628 (Paris, Archives nationales K7, 8), *Folradus abbas* is also written in Tironian notes.

[35] D KdGr. 144 (782 July 28) and D KdGr. 147 (782 September 26), ed. Mühlbacher.

[36] D KdGr. 147 (782 September 26), ed. Mühlbacher, immunity granted to Modena.

[37] D KdGr. 142 (782 July 4) and D KdGr. 146 (782 August 18), ed. Mühlbacher.

[38] D KdGr. 152 (786 March 29), ed. Mühlbacher.

[39] D KdGr. 111 (776 June 9) and D KdGr. 112 ([776] June 17), ed. Mühlbacher.

[40] D KdGr. 183 (797 [January–June]), ed. Mühlbacher; and see Heinrich Fichtenau, Genesius, Notar Karls des Großen (797–803), in: Folia diplomatica 1, ed. Saša Dušková (Brno 1971) 75–87, repr. in: Heinrich Fichtenau, Beiträge zur Mediävistik. Ausgewählte Aufsätze 2 (Stuttgart 1977) 18–38.

[41] D KdGr. 163–167 (790 March–790 August 31), ed. Mühlbacher: but D KdGr. 167 (790 August 31) for Salzburg may have been written somewhere else.

[42] D KdGr. 173–175 (792 July 27–792 August 4), ed. Mühlbacher.

and 813. On the charter evidence at least, therefore, it is only during the last three years of the reign that charter scribes and the king completely coincide in a prolonged residence at Aachen.

There are also instances in the earlier years of local scribes of charters, or scribes writing *ad vicem* a royal notary, that is, on behalf of a royal notary, who do not themselves seem to have been palace notaries.[43] I should like to reiterate again that these charters indicate variable documentary practice. The reports of the settlement of disputes were presented in a different style, and the notary responsible was not among the usual group of officials. Instead, he was associated with the count of the palace responsible for the record of the decisions reached.[44] These charters are invaluable documents in affording rare glimpses of the king's judicial hearings in the course of his travels and in the presence of the disputants, witnesses, counts, *scabini*, *fideles*, and the notary, all of whom attended these hearings in the king's presence.

The charters, in short, reflect a network of palace notaries, possibly distributed among the various royal palaces, or who at least journeyed out from a base to serve a particular region. Further, the charter evidence only occasionally corroborates the presence of the king; royal diplomas reflect the conduct of royal business but are of limited value in reconstructing the royal itinerary. A great deal of day-to-day administration in the name of the king was carried out across the kingdom in the king's absence, by notaries based in the various palaces, even if some of these officials actually appear to have accompanied the king himself. It seems likely that it was he, perhaps with some other scribes as assistants, who went to Rome as Charlemagne's secretary in 800–801, and Hadingus who accompanied the king to Salz where Charlemagne received envoys from Byzantium on his way to Bavaria.[45] The notary Ibbo appears to have gone with the king on his expedition to Saxony and Verden in 810.[46]

Thus the activities of the men who took responsibility for the production of the king's charters and on occasion even wrote them themselves rather than relying on anonymous underlings, together with the work of these same underlings, exposes a royal network of communication and a degree of centralisation, or at least concentration, of resources in consequence. The extant charters, so many of which concern the safeguarding of property, are the precious remnants of transactions between centre and localities,[47] and of communication with the king by messengers in the kinds of networks and system outlined by Volker Scior in his contribution to this volume. That this network was institutionalized is suggested by the organization and work of the notaries to which I now turn.

THE NOTARIES

It may be helpful to rehearse the principal elements of the information about the royal notaries offered by the royal diplomas. I shall then explore the implications of the notaries' role more fully in relation to the structure of Charlemagne's government and of the Carolingian state. In particular, I return to the proposition I made at the outset of this paper, that the notaries should be regarded as mediators between the political systems of centre and locality. Among the principal notaries serving Charlemagne,

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[43] D KdGr. 67 (772 May), D KdGr. 72, D KdGr. 80 (774 June 5), D KdGr. 114 (774 January), D KdGr. 127 ([779] November 13), D KdGr. 173 (792 July 27), D KdGr. 179 ([795] May), ed. Mühlbacher.

[44] These scribes are generally known as 'Gerichtsschreiber', see Rudolf Hübner, Gerichtsurkunden der fränkischen Zeit 1: Die Gerichtsurkunden aus Deutschland und Frankreich bis zum Jahre 1000, in: Zeitschrift der Savigny Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Germ. Abt. 12 (1893) 1–118; and ders., Gerichtsurkunden der fränkischen Zeit 2: Die Gerichtsurkunden aus Italien bis zum Jahre 1150, in: Zeitschrift der Savigny Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Germ. Abt. 14 (1893) 1–258. See D KdGr. 110 (775 December) and D KdGr. 196 (801 March 4), ed. Mühlbacher. This is the dispute subscribed by Genesius rather than a count of palace's scribe, though the reference to dukes and gastalds is pertinent to the Italian context. Compare D KdGr. 63 (771 November 3), D KdGr. 102 (775 July 28), D KdGr. 110 (755 December), D KdGr. 138 (781 December 16), D KdGr. 148, D KdGr. 197 (801 May 29), D KdGr. 204 (806 August 17), D KdGr. 213 (811 December 1), D KdGr. 216 (812 March 8), ed. Mühlbacher.

[45] Cf. Annales regni Francorum a. 803, ed. Kurze 118; and Annales Mettenses priores a. 803, ed. von Simson 89–90.

[46] D KdGr. 210 (810 August 12); and see Annales sancti Amandi (ed. Georg Pertz, MGH SS 1, Hannover 1826) 6–14, at 14; and Chronicon Moissiacense a saeculo quarto usque ad a. 818 et 840 (ed. Georg Pertz, MGH SS 1, Hannover 1826) 280–313, at 309.

[47] Cf. Franz Felten, Äbte und Laienäbte im Frankenreich. Studie zum Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche im früheren Mittelalter (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 20, Stuttgart 1980) 174–279.

Hitherius had been the head of the notaries under Pippin III and continued in this role in the early years of Charlemagne's reign. His place was taken in due course by Rado, who had himself served as a notary under Hitherius, and then Ercambald who in his turn had served under Rado. Let us consider the careers of these three men in a little more detail. Hitherius was responsible for charters between 768 and 775 enacted at Aachen, Orville, Herstal, Valenciennes, Blanzy[48], Brumath[49], Longlier, Quierzy (773 and 775)[50] and Pavia. Notaries who acted on his behalf were Wigbald and Rado.[51] Wigbald was active between 774 and 782. He was responsible for charters at Düren, Samoussy, St Denis, Quierzy[52], Vicenza, Herstal[53], Pavia, Cispliaco, Hersfeld[54] and Gondreville. Wigbald served under Hitherius (to 776) and Rado (777–782), but the latter had done a stint as an under-notary between 772 and 783 before heading the writing office. Rado subscribed charters at Thionville[55], Herstal[56], Worms[57], Düren[58], Verberie[59], Patris Giagio (possibly Prati Giaggio in Lombardy), Aachen[60], Quierzy, and an unidentified place.[61] At the first five of these Rado provided the *recognovi* notes *ad vicem Hitherii*.

As head of the writing office, Rado had a number of notaries working for him between 777 and 799 in addition to Wigbald.[62] They subscribed charters at the palaces of Herstal, Worms, Hersfeld, Pavia, Cispliaco, Capua, Rome, and Regensburg. In addition there was also Ercambald who succeeded Rado as head notary. For Rado, Ercambald provided the *recognovi* note and *subscriptio* in charters between 777 and 797 at Regensburg, Thionville, and Aachen, as well as in the cluster of palaces on the Rhine at Worms[63], Ingelheim, Mainz, Frankfurt, and Kostheim. His own charters at Aachen in 797

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[48] ChLA 19, 672, Colmar, Archives départmentales du haut-Rhin, fonds de Murbach 10G generalia 3, 2, and D KdGr. 64 (772 March 13), ed. Mühlbacher, in favour of Murbach.

[49] St Gallen, Stiftsarchiv E.E.5.B.44; D KdGr. 69 (772 July 5), ed. Mühlbacher, in favour of Arnald priest, and kept at St Gallen. For a facsimile see Diplomata Karolinorum 1, 3 (ed. Albert Bruckner, Basel 1974).

[50] ChLA 12, 533 and 534, Marburg Hessisches Staatsarchiv Kaiserurkunden Hersfeld 775 I 5 and 775 I 5 (redacted at Quierzy); D KdGr. 89 (775 January 5) and D KdGr. 90 (775 January 5), ed. Mühlbacher, in favour of Hersfeld.

[51] Cited *ad vicem Hitherii* by Rado (772) at Herstal, 774 x 6 at Worms, Düren, Verberie, 775 x 2 at Thionville and Düren, and one at Vicenza by Wigbald (776).

[52] Of the eight charters Wigbald subscribed at Quierzy, three survive in the original: D KdGr. 94 (775 March 14), D KdGr. 95 (775 April 4) and D KdGr. 101 (775 June 26), ed. Mühlbacher. See ChLA 15, 616 and 617 (Paris, Archives nationales K6 5/1 and 5/2); ChLA 19 (Colmar, Archives départmentales du haut-Rhin, fonds de Murbach 10G generalia 3, 3); and ChLA 95, 618 (Paris, Archives Nationales K6, 6), D KdGr. 101 (775 June 26), ed. Mühlbacher. Of these, two are from the St Denis archive in Paris and one from Murbach, now in Colmar.

[53] Of the four enacted at Herstal two survive in the original: D KdGr. 116 (777 January 7) and D KdGr. 123 (779 April 30), ed. Mühlbacher, for Fulda and St Marcel, Chalon respectively. See ChLA 12, 539 (München, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Kaiserselekt I) and ChLA 7, 651 (Paris, BnF Coll. Bourgogne 75, 4, CL 8837).

[54] D KdGr. 144 (782 June 28), ed. Mühlbacher, for Hersfeld. See ChLA 12, 538 (Marburg, Hessisches Staatsarchiv Kaiserurkunden Hersfeld 782 VII 28).

[55] Of the four at Thionville one original, D KdGr. 107 (775 November), ed. Mühlbacher, for Salonne preserved in the St Denis archive, is extant. See ChLA 16, 620 (Paris, Archives Nationales K6, 8); and 799 – Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit: Karl der Große und Papst Leo III. in Paderborn, ed. Christoph Stiegemann/Matthias Wemhoff, 3 vols. (Mainz 1999) 1, 3. 3, 127–128. The scribe's name is recorded in tironian notes as Adarulfus, one of Fulrad of St Denis's notaries.

[56] Three, including one original, D KdGr. 121 (779 März 13), ed. Mühlbacher, for Hersfeld. See ChLA 12, 537 (Marburg, Hessisches Staatsarchivv, Kaiserurkunden Hersfeld 779. III.13).

[57] One of the two survives in the original, D KdGr. 130 in St Gallen (St Gallen, Stiftsarchiv A.4.A.1).

[58] Two of the four survive in the original. The St Denis archive had two copies, one subscribed by Rado and the other by Wigbald: D KdGr. 84 (774 September 14) and D KdGr. 103 (775 August 3), ed. Mühlbacher. The former is for St Denis and the latter for Hersfeld. See ChLA 16, 613 and 614 (Paris, Archives Nationales K6, 5/1 and K6, 5/2) and ChLA 12, 535 (Marburg, Hessisches Staatsarchiv Kaiserurkunden Hersfeld 775.VIII.3).

[59] This survives in the original, D KdGr. 88 ([774–775]), ed. Mühlbacher, for St Denis. This is *a tractoria* and lacks a royal *subscriptio* or date clause ChLA 16, 621 dated 774–776 by Hartmut Atsma and Jean Vezin (Paris, Archives Nationales K6, 9).

[60] D KdGr. 118 (777 December 6), ed. Mühlbacher, for Salonne. See ChLA 19, 679 (Nancy, Archives Départmentales Meurthe-et-Moselle G. 468).

[61] D KdGr. 83 ([c. 744]), ed. Mühlbacher, for St Denis, preserved in the St Denis archive.

[62] Gildulfus wrote one charter in 790 at an unnamed place, D KdGr. 168 (790 December), ed. Mühlbacher.

[63] Of the two charters written at Worms one is original: D KdGr. 150 (783 October 9), ed. Mühlbacher, in favour of Arezzo ChLA 25, 797 (Arezzo, Archivio Capitolare canonica, 783 ottobre).

include one for which Maginardus acted as the ambasciator and one written by Genesius for which Ercambald supplied the recognitio.[64] From 799 to 812, Ercambald had notaries under him. The places of redaction, apart from Aachen itself, were Thionville, Ingelheim, St Martin's at Tours, Rome, and a place on the Reno river near Bologna. In addition to these named scribes we also have to register the number of anonymous chancery-trained scribes whose script is evident in the charters from the time of Hitherius and Rado.

The places of redaction suggest that these notaries had different spheres and concentrations of activity as well as areas – Alemannia, Aquitaine, Brittany, Saxony, Septimania and most of Bavaria and Italy – for which we have only at best one or two palaces recorded as places where charters were enacted, even though the gifts and grants of privileges to religious institutions and to lay individuals by Charlemagne extended throughout the empire.[65] The period when Hitherius and Rado presided over the notaries before 782–783 was one in which there were many charters drawn up in the palaces of West Francia, especially Quierzy, as well as outlying places such as Regensburg, Lippspringe, and Rome. Ercambald's period of office on the other hand, from 783 onwards, sees a greater concentration of charters enacted in the Rhine-Main-Moselle region and Aachen, again with outlying charters dated at Verden, Salz, Regensburg, Tours, Rome and near Bologna. It is Genesius who is responsible for the range of places from Tours to Rome.[66]

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE NOTARIES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

If we move from the places of redaction to consider the centres with which communication was established in order to secure grants or concessions of various kinds, then the network is extended still further. I had wondered whether mapping these places in relation to particular scribes might yield additional concentrations of responsibility, but when I did so this proved too inconclusive. This is partly as a result of the distortions of the charter survival, which, because related to particular centres, yields a similar pattern for each group of scribes.[67] Even so, it may be significant that the scribes working for Hitherius were redacting charters relating to centres beyond the Carolingian heartlands and especially in the Loire region, eastern Burgundy and Alsace, and that the charters of one of Rado's scribes, Jacob, are primarily concerned with centres in Italy. There may be a possibility, therefore, that particular notaries were assigned responsibility for transmitting requests to and from particular regions. Given the state of the evidence, this has to remain an hypothesis. What remains evident, however, is the underlying movement of messages, petitions, discussion and negotiation, most likely orchestrated by the notaries in consultation with counts, *missi* and the king himself, of which we have the final outcome in the charters. The royal notaries were indeed acting as additional mediators between centre and locality, augmenting the *missi dominici* and because of their charters we are also able to observe something of the long span of their careers.

It remains to explore whether the physical appearance of the charters as well as the careers of at least the head notaries Hitherius, Rado, and Ercambald, can shed further light on their role and status. Hitherius's career as a notary spanned the years from 753 to at least 776 and he thus was one of the few documentable members of Pippin III's entourage who continued in service under Charlemagne. He was presumably trained under Chrodegang of Metz and Widmar, or at least Baddilo, in the newly reconstituted writing office of Pippin III once Pippin had secured the throne. Hitherius's confident minuscule and his distinctive signature, chrismon, and beehive are to be seen on the handful of original charters surviving.[68] He then appears to have been rewarded with the abbacy of St Martin of

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[64] D KdGr. 181 (797 [March 31–April 12]) and D KdGr. 183 (797 [January–June]), ed. Mühlbacher. See also ChLA 16, 637 (Paris, Archives Nationales K7, n. 15). Maginardus is probably the chaplain Maginarius, Abbot of St Denis.

[65] See the maps of endowed institutions in Friedrich Prinz, Schenkungen und Privilegien Karls des Großen, in: Karl der Große. Lebenswerk und Nachleben 1: Persönlichkeit und Geschichte, ed. Wolfgang Braunfels/Helmut Beumann (Düsseldorf 1965) 488.

[66] Fichtenau, Genesius.

[67] McKitterick, Charlemagne 197–199.

[68] Peter Worm, Karolingische Rekognitionszeichen. Die Kanzlerzeile und ihre graphische Ausgestaltung auf den Herrscherurkunden des achten und neunten Jahrhunderts (element diplomatica 10/1 and 10/2, Marburg an der Lahn 2004) 1,

Tours. This was one of the richest and most significant abbacies in the Frankish kingdom and is a clear indication of Hitherius's status and, I would suggest, of the level of responsibility he had assumed in the kingdom. One of his charters is cited in the Life of Hadrian in the Liber pontificalis, where Hitherius is described as a religious and prudent chaplain and notary and present with Charlemagne in Rome where he made a copy of Charlemagne's 'donation' to Pope Hadrian.[69] Hitherius's activities in Italy extended beyond those of charter writer or secretary, for papal letters later report his enquiry into the papal patrimony in Sabina, and he worked with Maginarius in Italy on Charlemagne's behalf.[70] Hadrian's letters of 780–782 would indicate that Hitherius is still active in the early 780s and he appears to have held the abbacy of St Martin until his death in c. 795/796. His work as notary is also noted in the Ludovicianum, allegedly of 817, which is interesting as a witness to the fame of Hitherius, regardless of how that text ought now to be categorized and understood.[71] Whether Hitherius actually took up residence at Tours and left his notarial position is assumed rather than documented, though his name does not appear in extant charters after 776. Donald Bullough, for example, stated that Hitherius "left the court for the abbacy of Tours" in 776/777 but cites no supporting evidence.[72] If Hitherius's career had a similar pattern to that of Rado, then he may well have continued his notarial work while holding the abbacy of Tours. We should perhaps think of such abbacies as prizes, grants of revenues or at best part-time positions, with the degrees to which the post involved residence or committed abbatial superintendence left to the incumbent.

The career of Hitherius's successor, Rado, already active as notary under Hitherius from 772 until 783, but apparently thereafter the head of the notaries, is in any case rather more complicated.[73] His "virtuoso calligraphy" prompted an enthusiastic aesthetic reaction from the calligrapher Nicolette Gray, who thought the finest charters of Charlemagne were those "signed by Rado" whose "writing – one can truly say his drawing – of letters has a superb strength and vigour. The forms which he traces are as intricate as those of the Merovingians – look at his *gs* – but they are made with more conscious control and drawn with a new verve and an immense confidence. The aesthetic, non-utilitarian intention is explicit in the decorative termination given to the s of *signum* and the tails given to the monogram letters. Rado certainly deserves to be famed as a master calligrapher."[74] Rado appears to have taken up the abbacy of St Vaast in 790 but he is still visible in charters emanating from the royal writing office until 797 and other notaries write for him until 799.[75] Rado commissioned Alcuin to write a life of St Vaast and appears to have remained abbot until his death between 808 and 815/816. Rado's commission of the life of his monastery's patron saint, furthermore, is not the only indication of links between Rado, St Vaast and the abbey of St Martin of Tours.[76] The abbots of St Vaast were undoubtedly of high status. Rado's successor as abbot, Adalung, served Louis the Pious as an envoy

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29–31; ibid. 2, Abb. 8–12, 12–16. On the chrismon, see Erika Eisenlohr, Von ligierten zu symbolischen Invokationszeichen, in: Graphische Symbole in mittelalterlichen Urkunden. Beiträge zur diplomatischen Semiotik, ed. Peter Rück (Historische Hilfswissenschaften 3, Sigmaringen 1996) 167–262, at 199–200; and Robert-Henri Bautier, La chancellerie et les actes royaux dans les royaumes carolingiens, in: Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes 142 (1984) 5–80.

[69] Liber pontificalis, Vita XCVII (Hadrianus), 42 and 43 (ed. Louis Duchesne, Le Liber pontificalis, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 3 vols., Paris ²1955–1957) 1, 498 (the latter is the so-called 'Quierzy donation'). For the context see Thomas F.X. Noble, The Republic of St Peter. The Birth of the Papal State, 680–825 (Philadelphia 1984) 153–175.

[70] Codex carolinus 69, 70, 71 and 72 (ed. Walther Gundlach, MGH EE 3, Hannover 1892) 599–603.

[71] Pactum Hludowici pii cum paschali pontifice (817) (ed. Alfred Boretius, MGH LL Capitularia regum Francorum 1, Hannover 1883/repr. 1984) 352–355, at 354.

[72] Donald Bullough, 'Aula renovate': the Carolingian court before the Aachen palace, in: Proceedings of the British Academy 71 (1985) 267–301, repr. in: id., Carolingian Renewal: Sources and Heritage (Manchester 1991) 123–160, at 128. Bullough's dates for Hitherius's activity in Italy are dated by mistake a decade too early.

[73] Worm, Rekognitionszeichen 1, 35–37.

[74] Nicolette Gray, Lettering as Drawing (Oxford 1971)

[75] Worm, Rekognitionszeichen 2, Abb 17–19, 21–23.

[76] Rosamond McKitterick, Takamiya MS 58 and the transmission of Jerome's Letter Ep. 106 in the early middle ages, in: The Medieval Book and a Modern Collector: Essays in Honour of Toshiyuki Takamiya, ed. Takami Matsuda/Richard Linenthal/John Scahill (Woodbridge 2004) 3–18.

and was also abbot of Lorsch.[77] Thus we could surmise a number of scenarios for Rado, the most likely being that he drew revenues from St Vaast and was also a politically active, but probably a mostly-absent abbot.[78]

Of Ercambald we know still less. He first appears as a notary in 778 writing *ad vicem Radonis* until 797 and is recorded as chief notary in charters until 812.[79] He was certainly a flamboyant and highly-accomplished scribe, particularly in his control of the overall layout of his charters. Ercambald's place has sometimes been thought to have been assumed briefly by Jeremias, the chaplain who became archbishop of Sens in 818, but this is problematic.[80] I doubt whether the position of notary became more of a sinecure and honorary position in these later decades, any more than that of chaplain may have done, but there are peculiarities in both the production profile and the survival pattern of the charters of Charlemagne's last two decades which would merit further investigation.[81]

It should also be emphasized that royal charters differ in all aspects from the so-called private charters of the eighth and ninth centuries.[82] An extra dimension is the retention of the knowledge of Tironian notes, a form of antique shorthand, among the royal chancery scribes. Certainly these notes can be found in many ninth-century manuscripts elsewhere, but their occurrence in the form of annotation, as well as cursive notes, in centres with which some of the royal notaries were subsequently associated, such as St Denis, Tours and St Vaast should, as David Ganz remarked nearly twenty years ago, be properly studied. They suggest links generally between places of charter production and centres of literary culture and are an important reminder of the wider context in which to understand the political and cultural role of Charlemagne's professional scribes.[83]

Altogether the careers of these three men, serving the king over a long period and with an important accumulated and specialist knowledge of different aspects of the realm, suggest a far more versatile office of notary than is usually acknowledged. Hitherius, for one, could be counted one of Charlemagne's 'Italian experts'. The notaries' skill in charter redaction itself is not to be ignored. I have referred above to the aesthetic reactions to the calligraphy of Rado and to a lesser extent Hitherius. To these, however, should be added a comment on their technical expertise and what this implies. These three notaries and their many assistants were experts in the distinctive chancery cursive script employed for all the charters, in the provision of all the embellishments in the way of display scripts, chrismons, beehives and the royal monogramme, in the use of Tironian notes, in the consistent design and layout of the charters and in the format and formulaic and legal content of the texts they redacted. None of these is an easily- or quickly-won skill. Notaries no doubt required careful selection for aptitude and rigorous training thereafter.

That training included a knowledge of the law and legal practice, and a sense of the politically expedient, for it is this that is reflected in the charters granting legal rights, primarily to do with landownership. The activities of notaries such as Hitherius, Rado, Wigbod, Ercambald or Genesius indicate their responsibilities as envoys and diplomats as well. Yet we should also not neglect to take the evidence of the letters and the range of documents categorized as capitularies into account. These

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[77] Philippe Depreux, Prosopographie de l'entourage de Louis le Pieux, 781–840 (Sigmaringen 1997) 84–86. See also Adolphe de Cardavasque/August Terninck, L'abbaye de Saint-Vaast: Monographie historique, archéologique et littéraire de ce monastère, 3 vols. (Arras 1866–1868) 1, 60.

[78] Felten, Äbte und Laienäbte.

[79] Worm, Rekognitionszeichen 1, 39 and 2, Abb. 28–30, 33–35.

[80] McKitterick, Charlemagne 204–205; see Depreux, Prosopographie 275–276. See also the brief comments of Georges Tessier, Diplomatique royale française (Paris 1962) 43.

[81] Compare Fichtenau, Genesius; Herwig Wolfram, Lateinische Herrschertitel im neunten und zehnten Jahrhundert, in: Intitulatio 2: Lateinische Herrschertitel im neunten und zehnten Jahrhundert, ed. Herwig Wolfram (MIÖG Erg. Bd. 24, Wien 1988) 19–178, at 21; Worm, Rekognitionszeichen 1, 43.

[82] See the concise surveys in Mensch und Schrift im frühen Mittelalter, ed. Peter Erhart/Lorenz Hollenstein (St. Gallen 2006).

[83] Walter Goffart/David Ganz, Charters earlier than 800 from French collections, in: Speculum 65 (1990) 906–932, at 925; see also David Ganz, On the history of Tironian notes, in: Tironian Notes, ed. Peter Ganz (Wiesbaden 1990) 35–52; see also the classic study by Michael Tangl, Die tironischen Noten in den Urkunden der Karolinger, in: Archiv für Urkundenforschung 1 (1908) 87–166, repr. in: Michael Tangl, Das Mittelalter in Quellenkunde und Diplomatik. Ausgewählte Schriften 1 (Berlin 1966) 285–355.

witness to the work of the notaries, constantly engaged in royal business and orchestrating communication throughout the Carolingian realm.[84] Royal charters and other material emanating from the royal writing office were produced by a cohort of officials trained specifically for the purpose. They merit acknowledgement and as much respect for their work as Fulrad von St Denis, Angilram of Metz and Hildebold of Cologne.[85] Both individually and as a group their specialist knowledge and their range of contacts were a crucial element of early Carolingian government.

CONCLUSION

In the course of Charlemagne's reign, royal government was only partly dependent on the king's own movements; his accessibility in person was not the key issue. Although he had from the beginning of his reign insisted that any man in his kingdom should have the right to come to him, he actually relied to an increasing extent on his officials. Their competence was essential. But the chief characteristic of Charlemagne's government was his ability to communicate with his officials. Hence my theme in this paper has been communication. The written sources, for this, especially the charters, capitularies, letters and annals, are well known. I have emphasized in this paper, however, not so much what these texts, especially the charters, say as what they imply. They reflect the processes – oral and written – by which the king's requests for action and demands for information were communciated across time and space, from person to person, across and beyond the Frankish kingdoms. Such sources represent the expected, normal, deliberate and shared output of particular institutions and structures by which Charlemagne ruled his empire. Some of these were undoubtedly continuations of existing forms of communication. Not only was there an increased reliance on written forms of communication with contemporaries. This was matched by a remarkable engagement with texts from the past, hence my insistence on the notion of communication across time and space.[86] Communication, furthermore, is a two-way process. Writers and message-givers had their readers and hearers. All our sources were shared by many different people and many (as we see from Steffen Pazold's examples of capitularies in this volume) had a very considerable after-life and resonance in a variety of contexts. All written texts enable us to see a little behind them to expose the essential dynamics of rule and participation offered by communication and conversation, the consequent enhancement of political status, and the link between communication and political control. It is this combination of physical realization and mental conceptualisation of the obligations of rulership which underlay Charlemagne's state.

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[84] McKitterick, Charlemagne 233–263.

[85] See again Tangl, Tironische Noten; Josef Fleckenstein, Die Hofkapelle der deutschen Könige 1: Die karolingische Hofkapelle (Stuttgart 1959).

[86] Rosamond McKitterick, History, law and communication with the past in the Carolingian period, in: Comunicare e significare nell'alto Medioevo (Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 52, Spoleto 2005) 941–979.